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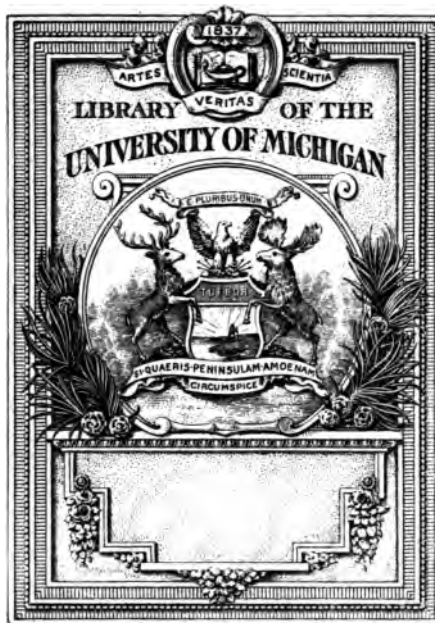
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## **THE ETERNAL CONFLICT**

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THE  
ETERNAL CONFLICT  
AN ESSAY

BY  
WILLIAM ROMAINE PATERSON  
( BENJAMIN SWIFT )



LONDON  
WILLIAM HEINEMANN  
1901

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#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

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*Se erro non credo veramente  
errare, et parlando et scrivendo  
non disputo per amor de la vit-  
toria per se stessa (perche ogni  
reputatione et vittoria stimo,  
nemica a Dio, vilissima, et senza  
punto di honore, dove non è la  
verità) ma per amor della vera  
sapienza, et studio della vera  
contemplazione, m'affatico, mi  
crucio, mi tormento.*

## INTRODUCTION

21 Now, if we could look into the triumphant souls of the saints we would doubtless find that in the course of their progress they came through extraordinary hazards, and that one single moment longer in dallying, one backward glance towards lost joys and *die verlorne Schöne* of the world, one last kiss of the hand to the doomed cities of pleasure they were forsaking, would have cost them their aureoles. In this great doctrine of spiritual chances I am not skilled. But if I were a religious believer I would certainly vindicate for myself the right to believe that since the road to God is at best a cloudy road, a baffling and circuitous road, it may matter little to the Infinite Charity at which point of it death overtakes us. The old theory which made a man's immortal well-being depend on the exact spiritual condition in which he left the world ought to be repulsive to any one who considers the human soul to be worth immortality at all. For character is not

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merely an affair of chronological sequence, or of regular and consistent progression. Rather, it must be viewed under the form of an organism which, like every other organism, keeps returning upon itself through successive phases of health and disease. And on close examination it will be found that this ambiguous movement is characteristic of the highest type of spiritual life. For even the saints, if we are to believe their confessions and their prayers, had their moments of temptation and forgetfulness, their moods of uncharitable and bitter judgments when the old stain rose again through the whiteness of their lives. But supposing God had suddenly called them, are we to believe that their struggle and mastery and sainthood would have counted for nothing simply because in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, they were found unprepared? And what right has any one who believes in God and immortality to believe in the finality of evil even in the case of a man whom death has plucked like a rotten fruit? Under so exalted a view of human destiny it might have been expected that man would not be considered merely like a withering plant which, once it has begun to wither, must only wither away. If this great belief were more to me than only a hope and a fearful looking for

of its reality, then indeed all the tormenting problems of human life would disappear. I would think of our destiny only under the form of some holy metempsychosis. I would believe neither in immortal stagnation nor immortal punishment, but in immortal progression. Only if the depths of cruelty in the universe were deeper than I had thought would I bring myself ever to accept the Christian doctrine of immortality, which for centuries shook and amazed the human soul. For the belief in a future state, which ought to soothe and comfort it, became its terror and scourge. During whole centuries the Church was turning the Empyrean into a kind of high hell, and holding out to her enemies a terrible gift of immortality combined with the fearful jibe, "He that is filthy let him be filthy still!" But if she had known the beauty of her own belief, if she had had the genius to transform and irradiate the dark doctrine of her Master, she would have tried to teach the world that the human soul is a thing of dawn, and that immortality is its last hope of rejuvenescence and transfiguration.

What surprises the outsider is, how little those make of it who hold this great belief. Once really possessed by the human brain it ought to dominate it. If the conviction of immortality were really a conviction the signifi- X

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cance of this present world ought to dwindle. But we find that the average modern Christian keeps as keen an eye on this world as on the next. His treasure seems to be laid up in two places, so that his heart must be in two places also. It is the world which is so close to him, surging upon him, and God becomes only an Appendix to the world. Let the average modern Christian ask himself whether his general conduct is regulated by the conceptions which underlie a future life or rather by those which underlie political economy, social advantage, and self-interest, and he will probably admit that the account of human character presented by Helvétius is in the main correct. The puzzle about the rich man's entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven that Christ presented for solution to his followers has apparently been long ago solved. No doubt the attempt of modern Christianity to find God *in* the world, in the very world of pleasure which Christian tradition exhorts us to forsake, is a wise attempt, but it is also a dangerous experiment in religious psychology. It is very rarely now that we meet those austere forms of asceticism which were typical of the virgin belief of the Church. Christianity has become fat and debonair. When we find the doctrine, if not preached at least implied, that God is to be discovered in

## INTRODUCTION

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the life of the senses as well as in the life of the spirit, it is obvious how momentous a change has taken place in the religious soul. With such a doctrine I have certainly no quarrel, and yet if I were a religious person I would look with suspicion upon it. For it is natural to ask, if God is in the world is it necessary to look for Him outside it? If He is in every cup of pleasure I drink shall I seek Him also in the cup of bitterness? The world is here, clinging to us, *our* world, the world of passion, beauty and emotion, the world of the delirium of the soul. And God? God becomes one of the *Schwankende Gestalten* that only haunt and hover over human life. That the belief in a future state is for ever present to the ordinary believer as an influence on his conduct is extremely doubtful. Rather his conduct is regulated by an acquiescence voluntary or involuntary in the system of rewards and penalties which he finds already operating in the world. This is the essence of the teaching of Helvétius, and there can be no doubt that the more we examine human conduct the more we see that its sources are not extra-mundane but are derived from the slow process of man's adaptation to his fellow men. There may still be many naïve believers who, if asked to explain the basis of their good works, would reply that it is the will

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of God, but the vast majority of civilised men and women, if made to reflect, would scarcely trace their moral perceptions to supernatural causes. If the structure of social life were suddenly to be withdrawn, if the systems of law which buttress it up were to be abolished, in order that the actions of men might be left to be governed by their belief in a scheme of supernatural rewards and punishments, we might well tremble for the future of the world.

A few years ago I was surprised when, having asked a distinguished theologian whether he believed in immortality, he replied by shaking his head, and I wondered whether, since a religious teacher who had devoted his life to inquiry into such great matters had discovered only negative conclusions in them, there was much chance of certitude among the mass of nominal Christians immersed in the business and pleasures of the world. The force with which this world impinges upon us, the myriad forms in which it appeals to us, together with the fatigue which accompanies the high rate of modern life, doubtless blur out of our minds the great dream of immortality. What can we do except cast a few anxious glances towards the unknown? Indeed, belief is in danger not merely from hostile intellectual analysis but from the indifference to religion

which a life of elaborate pleasure creates. There is, perhaps, nothing which distinguishes morally this modern age from all other ages as its organised attempt at happiness, its perpetual and vast co-operation to exploit the world for every pleasure it contains. It is one of the striking facts of human character that, whenever a new means of enjoyment is discovered, each individual becomes eager to appropriate it, no matter in how mutilated and imperfect a form it may reach him. We find among the poor the unconscious caricature of the pleasures of the rich. There are, indeed, few forms of human pleasure, as practised by the rich, which have not their correlates, more or less disfigured, among the poor. Pleasure, in fact, has been steadily democratising itself ever since slavery was abolished, and the mass of men woke up to assert their right to a tolerable existence. Doubtless the Reformation, which was a sort of counter theological Renaissance, buried paganism fathoms deeper. The Reformation was an intellectual rebellion of an extraordinarily violent kind, disguised in the form of religion. But the oftener we look into it the oftener we are astonished that it became, after the death of Luther, so inimical to all forms of pleasure, and laid a hand heavier than has ever been laid on the human soul. We expect

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moral freedom to accompany intellectual freedom, but that happened late, except, indeed, in some grotesque form among the Anabaptists. It is only now, however, that we have shaken off the Middle Ages and this Puritan view of life. As long as the Church, reformed or unreformed, dominated her devotees, their gaze was diverted to the other world. There was to be no tarrying in this one. But Christianity soon made a compromise with the world. The Church is very comfortably settled in it, owns property, and has, in short, discovered bread in the wilderness. Christianity, which began by despising life, has ended by enjoying it, and by determining to find as little tribulation in it as possible. So that if the poor have still the gospel they have also happiness preached unto them, both by precept and example ; and it is only natural if they are more concerned with happiness than with the gospel. If all the luxuries from the most elementary to the most elaborate are the gifts of God, He is apt to be lost sight of in the abundance of His gifts. But in the great hubbub of life, in this flux of illusions and pleasures, or of the hopes of pleasure in which we are immersed, is it surprising that the other world seems less real than this one ? Faith is to-day a crumbling mystery, and the sublime dogma of immortality lies like spiritual

*debris* amid the anarchism and upheaval of doubt.

Now, I admit that the belief in immortality is the most important a man can possess. Apart from it life becomes, except, perhaps, on some rather low ground of hedonism, a meaningless stream of perishing sensations. But what way lies open for those who perceive this emptiness of life and yet can guarantee nothing beyond it? We cannot do violence to our reason and say that because our existence considered as an end in itself seems only a tedious and turbid process, there *must* be another existence to justify and complete it. There may be ; but who knows? Although, therefore, a belief in the immortality and progress of the soul is of enormous value to the individual who possesses it, the data for it appear to be out of reach.<sup>1</sup> It used to be thought that it was the

<sup>1</sup> According to the startling conclusions of modern science only unicellular organisms, protozoa, infusoria, etc., are really assured of immortality. Cf. Weismann, Ueber Die Vererbung, Jena, 1892. He says, page 7, "Einzellige Organismen, Wurzelfüßer, Infusorien, vermehren sich durch Theilung, sie wachsen heran bis zu einer gewissen Grösse und spalten sich dann in zwei Hälften, die sich nicht nur in Grösse, sondern auch in Beschaffenheit vollständig gleichen und von deren keiner man sagen kann, sie sei die jüngere oder ältere. Solche Organismen besitzen in gewissem Sinn die von ihren höchstorganisirten Brüdern so sehnüchtig gewünschte Unsterblichkeit, sie können zwar wohl vernichtet werden, aber wenn sie ein günstiges Geschick von gewaltsamen Tode schützt, so leben sie fort und

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philosopher's business to prove that the universe is essentially rational, and that everything works together to an optimistic conclusion.<sup>1</sup> But a deeper knowledge of nature has made us more cautious. There have been many attempts at optimism; and optimism means, I suppose, that the universe is not a tragedy but a dramatic performance in which laughter exceeds tears. But the coarse jumble of the facts of life has dislocated every idealistic system the world has ever seen. The search for "meaning" of some kind is no doubt irrepressible, but what if the only meaning we can wring from the world is its meaninglessness. That is to say, we cannot discover its *raison d'être*. For all we know this brief night play of our lives, this flickering and shifting scenery, may some day be gathered up to be forgotten and effaced for ever. Who is to know that the predominance man has given himself, and the system of valuation upon which he rates his own history and his powers of thought and speech, are of any more importance

fort, etc. See also "Die Kontinuität des Keimplasmas," p. 58, Jena, 1862.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Voltaire, Dictionnaire Philosophique, Tome II. page 296, Paris, 1856. Attacking Holbach he says, "Spinoza du moins avouait une intelligence agissante dans ce grand tout qui constituait la nature : il y avait là de la philosophie. Mais je suis forcé de dire que je n'en trouve aucune dans le nouveau système." One would rather have expected him to say, "Il y avait là de la théologie."

than the systems of ants and bees? Nature has really no more respect for him than for the lowliest of her organisms. Indeed, his lot is keener and bitterer than theirs just because he is conscious and articulate, and can anticipate his own destruction.

Yes, yes, I too once possessed all magnificent beliefs until my brain awoke with a cry to see the perishing of its illusions. Have I not struggled hard to discern the meaning of our existence, groping towards God through this infernal mystery of human life? My ideal of science was that it was a perpetual conquest and wonderful progress, knowledge vanishing into knowledge. But who can be satisfied with a mere description of the process of things? And yet science does not pretend to give anything else. Although we knew the origin of life we would not really be any nearer the core of the mystery of all being. The mere being of being, the mere *is*, the mere possibility of there being anything to be, that is the real essence of the problem that tortures an awakened brain. If a man withdraws from the noise and disturbance of the world, if he takes no part in the huge conspiracy all round him to create interest in things that have really none, if he forgets for a moment the foolish series of his daily sensations, troubles, pleasures

and rights, to ask himself why there should be a universe at all, why there could never have been one, I shall be surprised if he does not become conscious of a kind of intellectual vertigo, and if his brain does not quiver and hide itself in amazement. This soul, too, was once full of beautiful beliefs! Human beauty, human love, human pomp, I passed these things by. I looked upon the human body only as a kind of shining arras to hold the soul like a sacred missal within its folds. I even lingered at the doors of the Church until religious collectivism repelled one, and I became my own priest, and began to look with my own eyes into the midnight of the soul. And then I became conscious of a marvellous twin nature, and felt that the soul is the strangest combination of asceticism and sensuousness. I have indeed a clue to the mysterious revolution which sometimes takes place in an impassioned believer, and I shall offer it for what it is worth. In my opinion religion and art are often closely allied, and are the disguised forms of each other in a highly strung and fervid nature. The biographies of the men of the Renaissance make this clear. At any rate, when I came back from the Orient I was full of the sense of contrast between East and West. We are far

more troubled than the Orientals by the struggle of right and wrong within us. And it is marvellous that Christ who came out of the East has won Europe whereas the East will have none of Him. When I returned from the majestic Orient I found Europe overrun by hypocrisies. For wherever Christianity has gone a peculiar form of hypocrisy has always flourished. It was the audacious genius of the Orient which attempted to discover a metaphysic of evil. But at that time my instincts were too Western to allow me to leave standing unsolved that sullen enigma of our character, I mean the junction of good and evil within us. Yet, as I walked over ashes of Nineveh and of Tyre, and saw the place of unrepentant Chorazin and the flowers and fountains of Damascus, and the ruins of Paestum and of Carthage, a strange new sense awoke within me. I began to think of those buried sins and splendours, and of the permanence of their spirit and type. Horizon went vanishing into horizon as I passed from one to another of these open graves and sunk Gomorrahs of the East, and seemed to see "antique wonders and lusts" rise about me, and the plains covered again by cohorts of Assyria. Then I looked at the modern world and saw the cohorts of Evil still hurrying and gleaming across it. I looked at old Europe wearing her

mask, old Europe the deepest hypocrite among the continents, with her Bible in one hand and her money-bags in the other, and the death-rattle of her beliefs in her throat. For she has turned Christ's Cross into a flag of this world. And then I became conscious of the vast continuity of human luxury and sin. Century after century has passed and the City of God is unbuilt, and the Prince and Kingdom of this world are still shining. It was then I seized upon the haunting paradox and unanswerable, infamous enigma which I have made the centre of this book. For even the very Bible which I had hoped to read with quickened imagination had changed its meaning, and I discovered the greater part of it to be only a historical guide-book to the great slumbrous, lustful and vindictive East. The intellectual and the sensuous revolt synchronised. I became conscious of untapped springs of pleasures and mysterious sources of life's vanity and glory. What is this effulgent world I have despised so long? And what are those climbing sensations within me, the sense of some slow frenzy working in my veins, the sense of delight, breath of roses, sense of morning, the pride and insolence of beauty? I fled from one mysterious city to another, but in every city I found those whispers and symbols

of fascination. Wherever I went the desire of beauty came with me like a familiar spirit. It was then I felt all the morbid glory of the confessions of Saint Augustine, and understood what he meant by the briars of desire growing rank above his head, and the clanking of the chains of his mortality. I became aware of strange places in the human soul and amorphous deeps. The Church? The Church was now a dreamless place. Those cold doors of dogma were shut upon me for ever, and I could only sit and watch the fleeting phantasmagoria of my beliefs.

Thus I must always be interested in the mysterious vacillations of the human soul and in its perpetual search and choice of gods and redeemers. I see nothing in life except the everlasting duel between the Son of Man and the Son of the Morning! However disguised, Christ and Lucifer appear eternally in history, and in human thought, and offer themselves to every human being. That is why the lives of Saint Augustine and of Saint Francis are of such vast importance. Both of those mysterious saints dedicated themselves first to the Prince of this world and then to the Prince of its Tribulation. It was only late they found that Lucifer is in Gethsemane as well as Christ, and on the Cross, too, and that it is a more terrible,

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because an unsought, Gethsemane and a more terrible Cross! This is the great mystery of the world. Pain and pleasure invade each other and are mixed and interfused. Lucifer has a crown of roses which is also of thorns. And so I have been driven to write this dim book. But let no one read it who has no insight into the human heart when it is vastly tempted ; no one who has no warmth of feeling, passion, imagination ; no one who has not felt the spell of beauty and its victory, its insolent victory, over the human will ; no one who has no sense of horizon and of what lies beyond the alluring, rich, lighted horizon ; no one who has not tried to think out the meaning of our fugitive lives. Ah, *caro mio*, how everything passes and flees, even Love, too, in the hurricane of his wings !

**PART I**

**THE TRAGEDY OF EXISTENCE**



## THE TRAGEDY OF EXISTENCE

IF we attempt to examine the problems which trouble a modern thinker, we shall find that they are far more complex than those, for instance, which troubled the thinkers of Greece. For, although at their basis those problems may be the same, yet the vast experience accumulated by mankind during the interval, the advent of new influences, the advent of Christianity, for example, the discovery, or, rather, the re-discovery of Nature, the work of science, the illusions of civilisation—all these factors have multiplied and aggravated the task of “the spectator of all time and all existence.” The statement of Buckle that man progresses intellectually and not morally is really an overstatement.<sup>1</sup> Even although “moral” were to be used in the narrow and unphilosophical English sense, it might still be shown that moral judgments are not stagnant, and that the history of law and punishment, for instance, is

<sup>1</sup> “Hist. of Civilisation,” London, 1891, vol. i. p. 181.

a history of perpetual change and modification. As a matter of fact, man is the most flexible of all created beings, and owes his unique position in the world to his power of variation. But if the law of correlated variation applies to physical organisms it ought to apply to moral organisms as well. Man, in short, is a being subject to composite change. The forms of his thought and of his institutions are being perpetually readjusted by processes which, although in some cases slow, are never relaxed. In what sense he progresses I shall not say, but, at any rate he *moves*, and, whether he moves backwards or forwards, it is with an increasing momentum due to his accumulating inheritance not merely of knowledge but of desire. I shall show later in which sense Virchow's theory—namely, that organic variations are only pathological—may be accepted; but I suppose that no living biologist of eminence would share any longer Virchow's belief in the constancy of species.<sup>1</sup> The truth is we have to thank the Middle Ages and scholasticism for that style of thought. Man was then looked upon as the only *punctum stans* in the universe, a sort of hard and fast product, the single fixed and self-centred being who could remain immobile amid

<sup>1</sup> "Die neueren Fortschritte in der Wissenschaft," p. 8, *et seqq.* Berlin, 1898.

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the flux of the world. And yet a dim perception of the transformation of living forms was already possessed by those thinkers of Greece to whom Lucretius went for his facts. It was Christianity which forced the world back to the belief that Nature was man's prepared stage, upon which he was dropped a completed being to work out a spiritual destiny. The task of the philosopher was then suddenly changed. He was no longer to connect man with Nature, but rather to emphasise the difference between them, and man's moral disorder was to be explained as not coming from without, but from within himself. I believe the task of the modern philosopher is just the reverse. For we now know that man takes his place in the combined movement of process and change of which the universe is the perpetual scene; that he has to win his way only as one organism among others; that he is protected by no privileges except those he has won; and that he still bears about with him the marks of the wounds and shocks of the struggle. But if his physical organism is to be traced back along the interminable, the intolerable line of his progenitors, to some dim point of its beginnings, I do not see how we are to escape the conclusion that it is out of all this foulness that the multitude of his passions and

his crimes have arisen.<sup>1</sup> The modern mind cannot avoid applying the law of causation to moral phenomena, or be content to judge man apart from the process that lies behind him. Long before the human being appeared, the world was given over to that vast and godless war of species out of which he too emerged. Mastodon, Mylodon, Toxodon, and Megatherium were carrying on their fearful struggle on "this footstool of the Almighty"; Nature, insane with this new desire of procreation, was pouring forth her species; the vast cycle of her putrefactive processes and of her colossal incest, the war of sex, the *bellum omnium contra omnes* had begun, and in the midst of it all saprophagous, coprophagous, with these unclean hands, she was busy at the making of man. But if this doctrine is true, and if these are the materials out of which man has been made, there can be no question that moral theories and moral judgments require to be recast. To understand man we must go beyond him. The law of causation, which is the law of fatality, must take the place of those rickety theories which isolated him from the forces that made him, and condemned him apart from them. Granted the theory of descent, it is not with impunity that such a

<sup>1</sup> The objections to Mr. Wallace's hypothesis appear to be insuperable.

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procession of unclean gods has passed through the human soul. Old psychologies, philosophies, theologies, find themselves here overturned. It is surely a great irony to discover that philosophy, after so many generations of activity, has been working only on the level of popular thought. Between Aristotle and Schopenhauer there is a crowd of thinkers, who, with the exception of a few great names—the names, for instance, of Bruno, Hobbes, Hume, and Schopenhauer himself—were blind about origins, and possessed only a feeble and uninformative psychology.<sup>1</sup> Those who are able may, indeed, console themselves with the belief that the theory of descent means only a vast extension of the sphere of secondary causes. But we are concerned here with a different point of view. Philosophy has too long treated man as if he were a eunuch.

To any one acquainted with the profound modifications which the science of the last fifty

<sup>1</sup> Wundt ("Grundriss der Psychologie," Leipzig, 1898, p. 207) points out that both Spinoza and Kant approached human passion not in a scientific interest but in the interest of a special system of ethics. And it might be added that even Hume ("A Treatise on Human Nature," T. H. Green's ed., vol. ii.) looks at the passions too much from the outside, and describes them only in illustration of hedonistic theory. Hume's caution and irony, however, must always be remembered. His real point of view is best seen in "A Dialogue," which is, perhaps, the most delightful thing in English philosophical literature.

years<sup>1</sup> has caused in psychology and in ethics that saying of Burke—"We think that no discoveries are to be made in morality,"<sup>2</sup> sounds strange and naïve. As a matter of fact, there is no province in which more remarkable discoveries may be made. We are not concerned here, however, with the attempt to trace the beginnings of a moral sense far back in the line of descent, or to offer a naturalistic explanation of the feelings of right and of wrong, or to adjust the utilitarian theory to the theory of development. That work has already been done, or at least it has been attempted.<sup>3</sup> Analysis on a large scale has been applied to the collective instincts of mankind, to social organisation and "objective conduct," and the centre of interest has been shifted from motives to results. But in this wide research ethics has been treated impersonally, and the emotions roused in the individual, as he discovers his place and his destiny in the world, have been neglected. It may well be that the moral rule ought to be deduced from "the general prin-

<sup>1</sup> The first edition of the "Origin of Species," however, was published as late as 1859.

<sup>2</sup> Works, Ed. London, 1801, vol. v. p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Spencer's "Principles of Ethics" and "Principles of Sociology," Leslie Stephen's "Science of Ethics," Moleschott's "Kreis lauf des Lebens," and many other works born out of Darwinism.

## THE TRAGEDY OF EXISTENCE 25

ciple of social vitality," but, after all, the first material for ethics and the central interest are to be found *within* the individual. I do not deny for a moment that the worth of an action must be finally judged by the amount of happiness it produces in the community. And probably the attempt to fix the worth of an action on its motive, or its apparent motive, is one of the slyest things ever perpetrated by the human mind. For, of course, only he who is pulling the inner strings really knows the motive, and the spectators must take his word for it! If, however, I object to the external treatment of ethics, it is not because I do not believe in it. Even Kant's categorical imperative, "Act according to a rule which can at once be made a universal law" (*Handle nach einer Maxime, welche zugleich als ein allgemeines Gesetz gelten kann*),<sup>1</sup> has essentially a utilitarian significance. Such a law could never be discovered except after a long experience of the *results* of conduct. But apart from Kant's own inconsistencies, there can be no question that ethics is something more than a branch of social economics. Ethics is concerned with a man's conduct towards himself as well as with his conduct towards other people. Like art, whose deepest relations

<sup>1</sup> "Metaphysik der Sitten," Leipzig, 1870, p. 25.

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are not outward but inward, ethics is concerned with the "Eternal Internal" of which St. Augustine speaks. No doubt it is of great importance to discover how we have become conscious of the series of moral contrasts and to deduce a genetic theory of ethics. In any case, modern literature is full of generalisations on that subject. What is absent is the personal ethical feeling, the joy in inward exploration and discovery, which is so characteristic of the moralists of Greece.<sup>1</sup> The individual's consciousness has been neglected for the sake of the consciousness of the Burgh. And yet the modern soul, just because of its complexity and the accumulation of illusions, offers material richer than ever Socrates handled. In its suspicion of the dark and mysterious non-moral sources out of which it has come, in its terrific capacity for pleasure and pain, in the excess of stimulation from which it suffers, in its deepening mistrust of life, in its religious confusion and spiritual insecurity, the modern soul offers an extraordinary spectacle. For it suffers from opposed atavisms deeply seated, which only a psychological butcher and philosophical "bounder," like Nietzsche, supposes to be easy to outroot.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Zeller's "Socrates and the Socratic Schools."

<sup>2</sup> "Die Fröliche Wissenschaft," Leipzig, 1893, . 163. See also "Wille zur Macht."

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Although I think that settled convictions are hardly possible for any one who has broken through the conventional euphemisms which hide the truth from us, I do not pretend to have any enthusiasm for the vulgar diatribe of Antichrist. The jubilation of Haeckel for his "monistische Ethik" is excessively shrill and thin.<sup>1</sup> His "moral theory based on anthropology" (*Sitten-lehre auf vernünftige Anthropologie gegründet*) is, I believe, no substitute at all for "mystical dogmas" (*sämmtliche mystischen Dogmen*) because it is founded on an empty psychology.<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche had no metaphysic and Haeckel has no psychology, but no one can lay open the ultimate things in human knowledge and emotion without them. These men have no perception of the real reason why the soul attempts to escape nature and to sustain itself artificially by its own phantasy. The tragedy of the soul consists in a perpetual attempt, and a perpetual failure, to obtain idealistic control of the world. If, however, even "materialists" admit that things exist only in relation to us,<sup>3</sup> they must also admit that there is no escape from sub-

<sup>1</sup> "Der Monismus," Bonn, 1900, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Moleschott's "Kreislauf des Lebens," vol. i. p. 19. "Ein Gegenstand nur ist durch sein Verhältniss zum Beobachter."

jective judgments or from the idealism and confusion they introduce. Spinoza said mankind are not to be shrieked over, but to be explained ; and the first thing to be explained is their relation to nature. All the problems of life and of science arise at the point where the mind meets nature and where sensations and knowledge begin. Now, "materialists" have supposed that the happiness of mankind consists in "a return to nature." It was to the human being who judged nature supernaturally and was saddled by religion (*religione refrenatus*) that Lucretius addressed his great poem. A true study of nature, he thinks, will deliver us from apprehension and misapprehension of it.

Quippe ita formido mortalis continet omnis,  
 Quod multa in terris fieri caeloque tuentur  
 Quorum operum causas nulla ratione videre  
 Possunt ac fieri divino numine rentur.  
 Quas ob res ubi viderimus nil posse creari  
 De nilo, tum quod sequimur iam rectius inde  
 Perspiciemus, et unde queat res quaeque creari  
 Et quo quaeque modo fiant opera sine divom.<sup>1</sup>

And Holbach also, whose "Système de la Nature" is the greatest contribution to materialism, since Lucretius, opens his book with words which have the same meaning :  
 "L'homme n'est malheureux que parce qu'il

<sup>1</sup> "De Rerum Natura," Book I. ll. 151-158. Munro's text.

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méconnaît la Nature."<sup>1</sup> It is he says, "Because man thinks he is double (*se croyant double*), that is to say, because he thinks he finds in himself something that is *not* in nature, that both nature and himself are such enigmas for him."<sup>2</sup> But his happiness will consist in a study of nature and an acceptance of her order and her disorder. Now there is a sense in which this is a platitude, but there is also a sense in which it is profoundly untrue. For I shall show that the more deeply the human mind examines nature the more bewildered it becomes ; and indeed Lucretius and Holbach both seem to admit that the events of nature are obscure and mysterious even for them. Instead of making Nature less terrible, Lucretius, for instance, adds to her terrors.<sup>3</sup> And Holbach, although he does not seem to be aware of the full meaning of his own *mot*, "The soul needs ideas as the stomach needs food" (*Notre âme a besoin*

<sup>1</sup> "Système de la Nature," London, 1775, vol. i. Préface de l'auteur. Holbach is really a great writer, and may be mentioned beside Lucretius.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 392.

<sup>3</sup> I refer, of course, to Book IV. and the doctrine of idols and images. There is evidence that Lucretius was personally haunted by hallucinations, a fact not surprising when we consider his doctrine that nature works by unseen bodies, "Corporibus cæcis igitur gerit res." This in itself is sufficiently weird. And although he struggles to explain on natural principles "the strange ghosts and idols" that appal men in

*d'idées comme notre estomac d'alimens*),<sup>1</sup> yet concedes the fact that we have "needs of imagination" (*besoins imaginaires*) which separate us from nature.<sup>2</sup> Has it never occurred to materialists that the discovery that nature is only a ruthless mechanism, is a more terrible doctrine than any that is to be found in the wrath and gloom of old mythologies and religions? Or that since all that *is* is Nature, mythologies and religions, which are simply the expression of *besoins imaginaires*, are thus justified? Besides it has always surprised me that it has never occurred to materialists that, just as certain natural substances become, under certain conditions, transformed into other substances, as for example a liquid or a solid, which, under given temperatures, can be changed into a vapour or gas, so man, although a product of nature may by the combinations

sleep and in waking, by saying that they are not souls broken away from hell, yet he recurs to psychological phenomena so often that we are tempted to believe he felt there was something more in the philosophy of nature than he had dreamed. His doctrine of images makes the world still more supernatural.

Cf. Book IV. ll. 788-793.

Quid porro, in numerum procedere cum simulacra  
Cernimus in somnis et mollia membra movere,  
Mollia mobiliter cum alternis bracchia mittunt  
Et repetunt oculis gestum pede convenienti?  
Scilicet arte madent simulacra et docta vagantur,  
Nocturno facere ut possint in tempore ludos.

*Op. cit.* p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 357.

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and permutations of *his* molecules be transformed, and actually is transformed, into a being whose properties *differ in kind* from those of the elements with which he started. The butterfly is a different creature from the chrysalis, and has different instincts. And if the butterfly cannot be forced back into the chrysalis, is man, as an imaginative and sensitive being, to be identified only with the raw elements of his composition? Who is able to set limits to the metamorphosis of a "quality?" And if, as materialists say, "All that we know and distinguish is a series of relations,"<sup>1</sup> does not the science of man, to use a phrase of Hume, begin only where materialism ends?

Popular thought discovers the antagonism between man and nature, and states it in a sentimental way. It begins by looking upon the world as a vast system of material means for human purposes. Things exist, it thinks, to bring light to our eyes and food to our lips, and enjoyment to every sense. Law and government, art, commerce, and science justify themselves only as long as they create and maintain the sources of human well-being. Everything works to appease some passion, procure some

<sup>1</sup> "Alles, was wir beobachten und zu unterscheiden vermögen, sind immer nur Verhältnisse." Moleschott, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 604.

few moments of pleasurable sensation, or satisfy some conception of value. But after all these material influences have converged upon the soul of man there comes the discovery, which is also a truth of psychology, that the life is more than meat and the body than raiment. This is a truth to which the modern mind has given characteristic expression in its attempt to extend and elaborate the sum of its pleasures. For every one feels that life does not begin to be worth living until the materials of mere existence have been gathered together in abundance. Thus there is a perpetual struggle towards leisure. But it is only when man has secured the sources of enjoyment, and rests among them, that he begins to know himself and to know nature. In the effort to pull the world into relation to himself, he is unconscious of the law of contrasts which is the foundation of all his perceptions. He makes the discovery not merely that nature does not exist for him, and that he is only one of her by-products, but that it is only when his struggle with her is over, or momentarily over, that his struggle with himself begins. His whole movement has been towards self-consciousness, but when he finds it, he finds also that it is too great a burden to bear. He turns back to nature, again to become one of her machines, and now perceives that his life is

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only a passage between leisure and toil, and that each is insupportable in itself. Between these disreputable alternatives human life must be passed. It is our self-consciousness which first divides us from nature, and then drives us back and forward between her and ourselves. But even this gross form of idealism, which is really only a refined and disappointed materialism, is also a kind of nostalgia. Man perceives that the central fact in the universe is restlessness, and that nature is only a blazing commentary on it. And he goes on wondering why he is so like her and so unlike !

It is not difficult to see why every systematic statement of the materialistic theory has been received with profound aversion by the mass of mankind. Even the philosophers of Europe have been influenced by Christianity, which has for almost two thousand years tamed and quietened human thought in such a way that, except in private, only a mild sort of homeopathic scepticism has been possible. Even Voltaire joined in the general attack on Holbach's great book, "Le Système de la Nature," which astonished the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> And Goethe tells us that he found the book so dead, so dull (*so grau, so totenhaft*), that neither he nor his

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* vol ii. p. 296.

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friends had patience to finish it.<sup>1</sup> Holbach's rigorous application of the laws of nature, not merely to the external world of man's perceptions but to the internal world of his emotions and beliefs, appeared to him to be absurd (*abgeschmackt*). "We could not," he says, "surrender the hope of becoming ever more rational, ever more independent of outward things, yes, ever more independent of our own selves. The word freedom sounds so beautiful (*klingt so schön*) that we refused to give it up even although it proved to be an error. Not one of us read the book through."<sup>2</sup> What is surprising, however, is that neither Goethe nor Voltaire perceived that the truths of materialism offer abundant opportunity for the tragic genius, since, indeed, materialism is only the statement of all the forces which oppose the human soul<sup>3</sup> and its thirst for phantasy. The limitations of

<sup>1</sup> "Dichtung und Wahrheit." Goethe's Werke, vol. ix. p. 50. Leipzig, 1889. Goethe says, "Alles sollte notwendig sein, und deswegen kein Gott. Könnte es denn aber nicht auch notwendig einen Gott geben? fragten wir." Spinoza helped him later to answer that question.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> It may be asked in what sense I use this word. Technically I accept the definition given by Wundt in his recently published "Volkerpsychologie," p. 9. Leipzig, 1900. "Für die empirische Psychologie kann die Seele nie etwas anderes sein als die tatsächlich gegebene Zusammenhang der psychischen Erlebnisse, nichts was zu diesen von aussen oder von innen hinzukommt." That is to say, the soul technically speaking is

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the materialist, his method of interpreting his facts ought not to blind us to the importance of his work. As a rule, materialists are deficient in psychological insight.<sup>1</sup> But their work provides us with a point of view which deepens the tragedy of the soul of man, and from which we are able to say that materialism is both true, and infamously true! The work of materialists, however, is external and unilluminated. It is not necessary, as we shall see later, to hold old dogmas of belief, it is necessary only to possess a rudimentary psychology in order to be able to reject materialism as the last word in the science of man. But, as a matter of fact, is not Voltaire's poem "On the Disaster at Lisbon," to mention only one of his works, simply a versification of the main thesis of "Le Système de la Nature?"

"Eléments, animaux, humains, tout est en guerre."<sup>2</sup>

What gives its terrible quality to Greek tragedy is the consciousness that behind man and his gods there lies an inexorable and everlasting will. It is this sort of spirit which I discover in materialism. In science and in the

an expression for the connection of psychical phenomena. But throughout this book I am thinking of the soul as the desire for beauty and phantasy.

<sup>1</sup> It is obvious, of course, that such a statement is not true of Hobbes.

<sup>2</sup> Œuvres complètes, vol. viii. p. 397. Paris, Hachette, 1877.

scientific view of life there is more tragedy than in all the tragic poets, and it is under this feeling that I am writing my book. Materialists and idealists, and all of us, write roundabout nature and say soft words of her like the words the Greeks said of the Eumenides. But she rises above us, indifferent, invincible, secret, and gigantic. Even Holbach, although he thinks he discovers the law of happiness within nature, seems to perceive that the truths of materialism must shake the imagination. After he has discussed the physical basis of conduct, and has explained that temperament, for instance, is only the habitual condition of the solids and fluids of which a man's body is composed, and that there are such things as necessary crimes (*crimes necessaires*), he adds, "Doubtless this will appear startling and terrible (*On trouvera sans doute cette vérité effrayante et terrible*).<sup>1</sup> Nature, in short, is a procession of causes and effects, and man is in the procession. It is remarkable that Holbach's phraseology is, with a few exceptions, so modern that a man of science of to-day might use it. Except when he attempts to explain the principle of gravitation, or talks about "le principe igné," or misconstrues religions, he is by no means out of date. He has even a glimmer of the variation

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 273.

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of species.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, he unloaded a very full brain into his book. And in spite of Goethe and Voltaire those who wish to refute materialism must reckon with "Le Système de la Nature."

Matter and motion, says Holbach, are all that we know. "Man occupies a place among the mass of creatures of whom nature is the sum . . . . His life is nothing but one long chain of connected and determined movements arising from internal or external causes; that is to say, caused by such elements as his blood, his nerves, his fibres, his bones, tissues, etc., or by things external to him, such as the air he breathes or the food he eats."<sup>2</sup> There is no such thing as free will. Man is only a subordinate part in a great whole. To be "free" he would require to be stronger than the entire universe which surrounds him, or not form part of it.<sup>3</sup> What we call "will" is only a modification of the brain, which results from the desire to receive pleasure or escape pain. Fatality is the universal order of things, and the moral world is not exempt from it. Self-consciousness which appears to be lawless is

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. i. p. 92. The passage is worth quoting—  
"Ainsi il n'y a nulle contradiction à croire que les espèces varient sans cesse, et il nous est aussi impossible de savoir ce qu'elles deviendront que de savoir ce qu'elles ont été."

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. i. p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 203.

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regulated by laws as rigid as those of the inorganic world. If men were free their freedom would be their fate. In nature, of which man forms part, there is nothing but a chain of causes and effects. Moral differences among men are the result of the differences of arrangement of their physical organisms, and every "moral quality" rises out of a material source.<sup>1</sup> If blood ceases to flow to the brain, thought and desire and will likewise cease, which proves, he says, that they are corporeal products. This roughly is the theory not merely of Holbach but of Hobbes, who both connect ancient with modern materialism. It is a doctrine which, curiously enough, Giordano Bruno also seems to reach from an opposite pole as if to prove that in the end the two extremes of idealism and materialism must somewhere meet. In his dialogue *De la Causa*, he says that from the point of view of the infinite, *i.e.*, the universal substance, it is a matter of indifference whether a particular being becomes a star, a worm, or a man (*nell'infinito queste cose sono indifferenti.*)<sup>2</sup>

Besides Lange's "History of Materialism," the only other modern systematic treatise known to me is Moleschott's "Kreislauf des

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 132, 133.

<sup>2</sup> *Le opere Italiane di Giordano Bruno*, vol. i. p. 278. Gottinga, 1888.

Lebens." This book is based on chemical principles, and man is regarded simply as a chemical product. Moleschott takes advantage of the chemical and biological discoveries of the nineteenth century, but his conclusions are not different from Holbach's although they are expressed in a coarser way. Nature consists in a perpetual process of interchange of substances (*Stoffwechsel*). The inorganic and the organic worlds are for ever meeting, mingling, and dissolving into new forms. The tissues of the human body, for instance, are composed of the same elements as those of animals and plants, and when decomposed exhibit the same chemical properties. Oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, sulphur, phosphorus, chlorine, sodium, potassium, calcium, iron, and magnesium form the chemical basis of the body and are the source of its activity.<sup>1</sup> Force and matter are identified.<sup>2</sup> Matter and its qualities are the only almighty power.<sup>3</sup> Matter rules man (*Der Stoff regiert den Menschen*).<sup>4</sup> Life consists in the sensibility to stimulus and irritation, and the physical basis of mind is proved by the fact that material degeneration of the substance

<sup>1</sup> "Alles löst sich auf in Ammoniak, Kohlensäure Wasser und Salze." *Op. cit.* vol. i. p. 375.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 374.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 426.

of the brain causes the derangement of consciousness. The human being has no control over the unconscious processes which are the basis of his bodily existence, and that portion of his being which has come to consciousness is infinitesimal in comparison with that portion which remains unconscious. His spiritual life (*so gennant*) is the necessary and pre-determined result of causes as mechanical as those which keep a star in its courses. A will that is free is meaningless.<sup>1</sup> Freedom consists in accepting the fact with joy (*mit Freude*), that we are not free.<sup>2</sup> Life is a circle. The human being, like the animal or the plant, rises out of inorganic elements, absorbs others, waxes, dies, and his body disappears in new formations. Or to quote Fischer: "Free nitrogen, free hydrogen, ammonia, methane, carbonic acid, and sulphuretted hydrogen are the end results of the disintegration of the human body."<sup>3</sup>

The doctrine of materialism has, further, found support in the theory of evolution. "The difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind. We have seen that the senses and intuitions, the various emotions

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 608.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 500.

<sup>3</sup> "The Structure and Functions of Bacteria." By A. Fischer. Engl. Tr. Clarendon Press, 1900.

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and faculties such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason, &c., of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition in the lower animals.”<sup>1</sup> Again: “The main conclusion here arrived at, and now held by many<sup>2</sup> materialists who are well competent to form a sound judgment, is that man is descended from some less highly organised form. The grounds upon which this conclusion rests will never be shaken, for the close similarity between man and the lower animals in embryonic development, as well as in innumerable points of structure and constitution, both of high and of the most trifling importance, the rudiments which he retains, and the abnormal reversion to which he is occasionally liable, are facts which cannot be disputed. They have long been known, but until recently they told us nothing with respect to the origin of man. Now when viewed by the light of our knowledge of the whole organic world, their meaning is unmistakable. The great principle of evolution stands up clear and firm when these groups of facts are considered in connection with others, such as the mental affinities of the members of the same group,

<sup>1</sup> “The Descent of Man.” London, 1891. Vol. i. p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> The “many” have now become the majority or rather the totality.

their geographical distribution in past and present times, and their geological succession. It is incredible that all these facts should speak falsely. He who is not content to look, like a savage, at the phenomena of nature as disconnected, cannot any longer believe that man is the work of a separate act of creation. He will be forced to admit that the close resemblance of the embryo of man to that, for instance, of a dog—the construction of his skull, limbs, and whole frame on the same plan with that of other mammals, independently of the uses to which the parts may be put, occasional reappearance of various structures, for instance of several muscles, which man does not normally possess, but which are common to the quadrumana, and a crowd of analogous facts, all point in the plainest manner to the conclusion that man is the co-descendant with other mammals of a common progenitor.”<sup>1</sup>

So far, therefore, as man is concerned, these are the conclusions to which science has come, and at this time of day it is a fruitless task to dispute them. We may, however, accept the facts

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 421. See also Haeckel's "Ursprung des Menschen." Bonn, 1889. Virchow's admission that the line of partition between man and the animals is almost effaced (*immer undeutlicher geworden*) stands in curious contrast with his attempt to distinguish them biologically. See "Die neueren Fortschritte in der Wissenschaft." Berlin, 1898.

of materialism, and yet deny that materialism can have the pretence to be an ultimate theory of knowing and being. Neither materialism nor idealism furnishes such a theory. And as for monism, it is only a sort of lukewarm idealism. Perhaps in the end materialism and idealism mean the same thing. At any rate, surely Wundt is correct when he says that neither the one conception nor the other has ever contributed anything to a final interpretation of the world. They are still in conflict, as they have been from the beginning. And if any glimmer of idealism appears in this book, it appears not for the sake of a philosophical theory, but for the sake of an interpretation of the world founded more or less on æsthetics. What the world in substance really is, I do not know. I know only the world of my own construction. Love and hate, anger, beauty, and lust remain what they are, whether we are materialists or idealists. And, if all that we know is only our own sensations, I do not see why it is illegitimate to carry our æsthetic judgments into nature. By æsthetics I do not mean merely the sense of beauty ; I mean simply the sensitive sense, par excellence *Empfindlichkeit*. The work of knowledge and the discovery of brutal fact provide us only with material for our judgments of acquiescence or revolt. Man is the

natural and also the unnatural product of nature. His own problems are really independent of the two hypotheses of materialism and idealism. For conduct is an affair of relations, and depends upon a perception of immaterial qualities. The tissue of the external world and of man may be what it pleases : it is still true that a fact could never be the same in psychology as it is in physics. It is this change in the meaning of a fact when it drops among our emotions which must not be forgotten. There is a point of view from which it may be said that, whether what we take to be reality is illusion, or whether illusion is reality, it is all one. In the world of feeling everything that is illusion is also real. Thus, although in nature there is really no such thing as disorder, or cruelty, or crime, but only the stages of a process, yet man, as a sensitive spectator, must judge an event, a storm, a struggle, a catastrophe according as it startles his imagination or threatens his well-being. Frankly, I believe that all our judgments, except those which by a hard struggle the understanding helps us to form, are founded on the instinct of self-preservation. And in this book I shall judge everything according as it strikes the human mind. If the universe were a series of mechanical laws *without a spectator*, of course there would be

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nothing to say, and no one to say it. But the science of man must take account of the feelings roused in man as he observes and suffers in the world. If nature receives all her meaning from *us*—a truth which is so indisputable that it is a platitude in philosophy—I do not see why we should be limited to objective judgments. The only judgment which interests the human mind is a judgment of valuation, and logic is nothing but a process from the bare assertion of a fact to the assertion of its worth. My position, therefore, is this : I accept the facts of the materialists, but I interpret them differently. That is to say, the intellect may judge the facts as true, but my feeling judges them as outrageous. When I said at the beginning that the task of the philosopher is to connect man with nature, I only partly foreshadowed the truth that, although a product of nature, man, to put it paradoxically, is her most *unnatural*, because her most spiritual, product. I could not be content with the bloodless destription of human experience which Lotze gives. In his attempt at a compromise between the idealistic and the mechanical view of the world he gives with one hand what he takes away with another. He attempts to discover a harmony. On the contrary, I find the deepest antagonism everywhere, and the deepest

dissonance. The search for unity is like the search for the philosopher's stone. Unity is a psychological mirage.

The modern soul finds its spiritual conceptions wrecked and beleaguered. One by one its beliefs are disappearing, and yet it knows it needs beliefs. It peers about the world for footsteps of divinity, but finds only the great paw of nature. Nothing seems to survive modern analysis, and the old mysteries are riddled and broken up by this fierce ammunition of knowledge. I shall never forget the moment I was compelled to give up "the divine finger" in history, for instance. I was reading Bossuet's "Sur L'Histoire Universelle," in which M. le Dauphin is assured that the long chain of particular causes which make and unmake empires depends on the secret judgments of Divine Providence (*ce long enchaînement des causes particulières, qui font et défont les empires, dépend des jugements secrets de la divine Providence*).<sup>1</sup> I then read Nelli's "Life of Galileo," where I found that the reason why Galileo was made to retract his theory of the earth's motion was that his enemies had maliciously persuaded the Pope (Urban VIII.) that Simplicio, the personage in Galileo's dialogue who is made to

<sup>1</sup> "Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle." Paris, Garnier, p. 421.

defend the Ptolemaic theory, was meant for the Pope himself, in order that his Holiness might be thus covered with ridicule (*mettendolo così in faccia del pubblico a derisione*).<sup>1</sup> From that moment I decided to close Bossuet and open Machiavelli. Are we to praise nature and write history as if God were like an orator waiting for clapping of hands? He is not in nature nor in history. Man's eyes search every horizon, and he sees only the spray fountains of illusion. Nature and her pomps—yes, her lights, her stars, and her dawns, what are they but the scenery of immortal vexation? Science does not bring tranquillity. The last steps of science are dark and fumbling. That is a deep saying of Chateaubriand, although I believe it was suggested first by Pascal, *Les siècles savants ont toujours touché aux siècles de destruction*.<sup>2</sup> But Chateaubriand did not see, he had not the sort of intellect to see, that the most impressive of all tragedies is the tragedy of the human brain, which has toiled fruitlessly at the secret of the world.

I shall now go on to show why I believe that a deeper knowledge of nature, such as

<sup>1</sup> "Vita del Galileo." Da Gio De' Nelli, vol. ii. p. 515. Losanna, 1793.

<sup>2</sup> "Génie du Christianisme." Paris, Hachette, p. 92.

materialism proposes, instead of tranquillising the human mind only bewilders it.

If there is one argument which may be said to have survived the disastrous analysis which science applies to almost all our fundamental conceptions, it is the famous argument from design. Indeed, it is supposed that this argument has gained rather than lost in impressiveness during the last fifty years. For although it has no longer the form in which it appealed to Paley, there can be no question that the conception which underlies it has been deepened and very widely extended. In other words, the theory of evolution has brought to light a mass of facts which prove beyond a doubt that even the minutest organisms are provided with mechanisms wonderfully adapted to their conditions of life. The strength of the theory of development, in fact, depends on the principle that all that is "purposeless" in nature suffers elimination and destruction, whereas all that is fitted and built to attain its ends survives. Any organ that is "purposeless" is explained as having marked a stage in a past development, out of which new conditions have arisen. Even thinkers who cannot be suspected of theological or teleological bias have recognised the important truth that nature works skilfully towards her ends. And although Hume came

before the great modern emphasis on the fact, he expresses the fact itself so clearly that it may be well to quote him. "All things in the universe," he says, "are essentially of a piece. Everything is adjusted to everything. One design prevails throughout the whole."<sup>1</sup> He says, further, "A purpose, an intention, a design is evident in everything."<sup>2</sup> And although after he has discussed "The Natural History of Religion," he concludes that "the whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery,"<sup>3</sup> yet he takes refuge in a philosopher's contemplation of "the admirable adjustment of final causes." While modern science does not seriously concern itself with "final causes," yet on the whole it supports Hume's belief that "an intention, a design, is evident in everything."

Now, since the argument from design is still used for the purpose of impressing our emotions, it is permissible to reply to it from the same point of view. And I think it is possible to show not merely that there is not too little design in the universe, but that there is too much. Briefly, what I mean is that the struggle for existence presupposes two sorts of design which are in opposition to each other.

<sup>1</sup> "Essays," vol. ii. p. 314, T. H. Green's Ed. London, 1875.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 361.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 363.

This principle, in fact, acts in two ways, and has been in contradiction with itself throughout the whole process of evolution. Since this is the central fact propounded in this book, and since it will be shown to re-appear in the moral and religious life of man, the reader will do well to grasp it. I shall do my best to illustrate it by two sets of facts taken from the operations of nature—(1) in the inorganic, and (2) in the organic world. And, although in describing those facts I shall make use of phraseology which came out of Darwinism, the facts themselves and the interpretation of them are independent of that theory.

Now, except by a few bold brains, the attempt to apply Darwinism to the stars would probably be received with consternation and derision. And yet this is what Du Prel has done, and he has done it, moreover, with success.<sup>1</sup> For he has discovered that mechanical forces are likewise engaged in a struggle for existence, and that, indeed, it is only on that principle that they are intelligible. The stars, in short, are struggling together in a war of forces as fierce as ever raged between species. The ordinary observer supposes that the face of the sky has

<sup>1</sup> "Der Kampf ums Dasein am Himmel." The title of the third edition, however, is "Entwicklungsgeschichte des Weltalls." 1882, Leipzig.

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not changed since Job watched Orion and the Pleiades, and that, although man and his gods and their temples pass away, at least the stars remain for ever and ever. The man of science, however, is impressed by a still deeper thought—viz., that nature is not immobile, but mobile, and for ever passing away, and for ever *in process*. Even although we reasoned by analogy, therefore, we should expect to find that not merely the inorganic world beneath us, and around us, but also the inorganic above us, is, like the organic, subject to change. And this is what we do find. Supposing all the planets disappeared, many generations of men (if the earth held her place) would still behold their light. If Arcturus perished, its light could be visible for twenty-four years, since its rays take that time to travel to the earth. And there is a star which, although it foundered to-night, would be seen for 573 years afterwards, because the light that it sends us left it in the thirteenth century. Thus just as in the miniature world of insects struggles are taking place, which not even the microscope can reveal, so movements and changes, of which we are unaware, are going on among the chemical and mechanical forces of the universe. If there is one hypothesis in science that may be said to have grown into a fact, it is the nebular hypothesis, according

to which the sidereal system was evolved out of a chaos of elements which gradually organised itself into such order as we see. The importance of Du Prel's work consists in the attempt to impress the imagination with the fact that the process is still going on, and to discover the laws by which the sidereal system obtained its equilibrium. Whereas the ordinary observer believes that that system was never imperfect, but constituted a harmony from the beginning, the truth is, that—even yet—it contains unstable elements and mechanical contradictions—*Mechanische Widersprüche*. The laws of adaptation and variation, in fact, which Darwin discovered among organic things, are applicable *throughout* the universe, and it is in obedience to them that the planets discovered their orbits. It is certainly an amazing thought that a star requires ✓ to fight for its place in the sky with as much persistence as an animal requires in the struggle between species! The single fact that a comet changes its path would be sufficient basis for Du Prel's hypothesis. For what does change of path imply except a disturbance coming from external forces? The conception of a struggle between the stars thus begins to be intelligible. Brorsen's comet, for instance, is known to have suffered changes in its path owing to the dis-

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turbing attractive force of Jupiter. As it described its ellipse, its nearest approach to the sun was once 30,000,000 miles and its greatest distance 117,000,000 miles. But at the next observation 30,000,000 had become 13,000,000, and 117,000,000 had become 113,000,000. Comets, meteorites, and asteroids are to be explained on the principle of the elimination of the "unfit." There is a perpetual weeding out (*Ausjätungsprozess*) of those bodies, which in the Kampf ums Dasein are overcome by bodies stronger than themselves. How are the observed changes of orbit to be explained except on the hypothesis that the system is not yet thoroughly organised, and that some of its members are being persecuted by the force of gravitation? The fall of meteorites and asteroids (in Smolensk in the year 1807 a meteorite fell which weighed 70 kilograms) proves that those bodies which are unable to withstand by their own repulsive forces the attractive forces of others disappear from the system. Newton's Law of Gravitation runs: Every planet is attracted towards the sun by a force which varies according to the inverse square of the distance. And this law is supplemented by another, which states that the planets are likewise attracted and repelled by each other. Thus a system which, as we look

at it, seems an immobile product, a kind of *Nunc Stans*, is really a sidereal Armageddon of blind forces. The life of a planet consists in an attempt, which lasts millions of years, to overcome by means of its own tangential velocity (*Tangentialgeschwindigkeit*) the attractive forces of the sun.<sup>1</sup> The fact that the path is elliptical means that there is a temporary compromise between those two forces, but the compromise cannot last. As the velocity slackens, the planet gradually approaches the limits of its existence. "Before every star lies the inexorable alternative either to adapt itself to the sidereal system or to be thrust from it."<sup>2</sup> The law of gravitation is the instrument of selection (*besorgende Faktor*) by means of which the fittest survive and the unfit disappear. The change of a comet's path means the attempt to escape or postpone destruction, and, according to Schiaparelli, our stellar system is already full of the *débris* of comets and stars that have fallen in the struggle. The miniature catastrophes of asteroids and meteorites are only prophetic of what must yet take place on a large scale. The sidereal system is moving towards its own dissolution. Owing to the gradual loss of speed the planets are unavoidably drawn nearer the sun, which,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.

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like Kronos of the Greeks, must one day devour his own children. *Alles ist dauerlos!* The universe as we know it shall become again a heap of magnetic dust.<sup>1</sup> ✓

Now if the facts which we have thus rapidly brought together have any meaning it is that we are here face to face with a dual working of the principle of design. That is to say, the force of gravity acts both as the organiser and the disorganiser of the sidereal system. If the law of gravitation be accepted as the mechanical expression of the principle of natural selection we discover a constructive and destructive movement rising out of it. In vain a star obeys that law, because to obey it means its own destruction by the superior attractive force. In vain it attempts to disobey it, because to disobey it means disappearance from the system. To escape the dilemma it would require to be so strong as to pull the sun and all the other stars along with it and to form a new system for itself. And the compromise effected by its own tangential velocity cannot last, because that

<sup>1</sup> Du Prel's merit lies not in the discovery of new facts, but in his use of a new way of interpreting the facts. Besides, his book betrays metaphysical insight. I am told that metaphysic is dead. Metaphysic is never dead. The particular sciences are of no interest until metaphysic gathers them together and relates them to human emotion and to human thought. Voltaire's sneer ("Zadig," chap. i.) is the sneer of an outsider.

velocity is gradually being exhausted by the resistance of the ether, so that ultimately the star must succumb to the central force. This law of struggle towards synthesis and then towards dissolution is universal. The ultimate fact in the universe is that it is a succession of movements of integration and disintegration. Forces designedly constructive are met and matched by forces designedly destructive. Or, to put it in other words, at any given moment the universe is neither a cosmos nor a chaos, but a cosmos-chaos ; that is, a chaos in process of becoming a cosmos, or a cosmos in process of becoming a chaos.

If we now turn to the organic world we shall find that plants, for instance, afford instances of this dual working of the principle of design which is the most impressive fact in nature, for it is well known that in their struggle for the occupation of the earth and the air they actually destroy each other.<sup>1</sup> But the most emphatic instances of these antagonistic purposes are to be found not among plants but among animals. Indeed, it was not until the great law of the struggle for existence was formulated that any

<sup>1</sup> Darwin, "Origin of Species." Ed. 1883, p. 50. I do not know if it has been noticed that Schopenhauer almost anticipated the phrase "Struggle for Existence" by the phrase "Streben nach Dasein." "Sämmtliche Werke," Leipzig, 1891, vol. ii, p. 369.

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real insight into nature became possible. But it must never be forgotten that this fact of struggle depends upon the still more fundamental fact of over-production of organic beings.<sup>1</sup> In the first chapter of his work on Population, Malthus discovered that, whereas population goes on doubling itself every twenty-five years, or increases in a geometrical ratio, the means of subsistence under circumstances the most favourable to human industry could not possibly be made to increase faster than in an arithmetical ratio.<sup>2</sup> It was this principle which Darwin applied to the animal and vegetable kingdoms. "As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive, and as consequently there is a frequently occurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving."<sup>3</sup> Now, given these facts, and granted also the principle of design which is not in dispute, let us see how it and they work together. Suppose there is an animal equipped

<sup>1</sup> "The cholera vibrio needs only twenty minutes, so that in one day a single bacillus would rejoice in a progeny of sixteen hundred trillions." Fischer, "The Structure and Functions of Bacteria," p. 17. Clarendon Press, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> "An Essay on the Principle of Population." Ward, Lock and Co., 1890, pp. 4 and 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 3.

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for the battle of life and possessed of weapons such as teeth, claws, horns, and tusks by means of which it can defend itself against its enemies. We admire the wonderful mechanism of all its powers, the keenness of eyesight and of scent, the accuracy of its spring, its cunning, its boldness—all the qualities, in short, which have transformed it into a moving weapon. But presently its enemy comes into the field no less ready for battle, no less equipped. It may be an enemy of the same species,<sup>1</sup> in which case the combatants may be so equally matched that even a good judge would be unable to foretell the issue. Or, it may be an enemy from another species, endowed with superior weapons, sharper teeth and claws, more powerful horns and tusks, deeper cunning, surer methods of attack and defence. But in this case, too, we must admire the contrivance and design which have transformed *this* animal into a formidable weapon for the purposes of destruction. In short, here are two sorts of teleology, one directed towards the production of weapons of offence, and the other directed towards the production of weapons of defence. So that, for example, the better equipped descendants of

<sup>1</sup> According to Darwin the struggle for life is most severe between individuals and varieties of the same species. *Op. cit.* p. 59.

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any species are able to annihilate the surviving representatives of the parent species. The conclusion is, therefore, that Nature exists for the sake of tragic sport. "Design" produces not a single effect, as Hume thought, but a double effect. And note that "Design" is called into play only for the sake of controlling the effects of the insane sexual activity of nature. It is for the sake of the momentary and fugitive pleasures of sex that millions of beings are hurried into life only to be hurried out of it. Indeed, the only divine command which has ever been joyfully and thoroughly obeyed is that one, "Be fruitful and multiply!"<sup>1</sup> and it has filled the world with hunger, madness and disease.

If then, I am asked to contemplate the ingenuity of the sphex wasp which first lays her eggs and then seizes a certain spider, paralyses it by a sting, and buries it with the eggs so that it may become the food of the offspring;<sup>2</sup> or the case of the midge within whose body certain cells begin to develop and then prey on the mother, eat her, and leave her a heap of waste products and afterwards issue from her *débris* to pass through the same experience themselves; or the case of the young cuckoo

<sup>1</sup> Book of Genesis, chap. i. verse 22.

<sup>2</sup> "Essays," G. T. Romanes. Longmans, 1897, p. 53.

or molothrus which is dropped by the mother bird into an alien nest, and "while still blind and not able even to hold up its head" succeeds in ejecting its foster brothers which are left to die on the ground;<sup>1</sup> or the law of battle between antelopes;<sup>2</sup> or those strange skeletons which were found "with the bones inextricably locked together, showing how miserably the victor and the vanquished had perished ages ago";<sup>3</sup> or if I am asked to consider the fact that syphilis may be inherited and causes paralysis and insanity in the offspring,<sup>4</sup> I am content not to raise the question as to the beneficence of these doings, but simply to ask what is the meaning of such contradictory purposes? The truth is we are touching here on the scientific basis of evil, and are only stating in language, more or less scientific, the hideous old problem which has tormented all the religious and philosophical thinkers of the world. Let the reader grasp this truth, let him seize the fact that as much ingenuity has been expended on the destructive as on the constructive forces of the universe and he will begin to see the point of view from which this book is being written. There is not

<sup>1</sup> "Origin of Species," p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> "Descent of Man," vol. ii. p. 272, ed. 1891.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 258.

<sup>4</sup> *British Medical Journal*, July 14, 1900. Mott's Croonian Lectures, No. IV,

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a single known case of one species having been created for the sake of another. This "law of nihilism" is fundamental in Nature and, as we shall see, reappears with fearful malignity in ethics and the life of man. The kingdom of nature is like the kingdom of Beelzebub, divided against itself. My conclusion is, therefore, that the argument from design, if studied closely, becomes an argument *against* idealism. For it is clear that the destructive is as necessary as the constructive factor, and that without both Nature is unintelligible.

Doubtless the theological mind would attempt to escape the dilemma by hoping that "the whole may be purposive." Even Hume makes an attempt of this sort. He says that "Even the contrarieties of Nature, by discovering themselves everywhere, become proofs of some consistent plan, and establish one single purpose or intention, however inexplicable and incomprehensible."<sup>1</sup> But since teleology is an affair of relations the whole could be "purposive" only in relation to another whole, so that this conception would only extend the dilemma. No sooner is a "unity," whether it be a minute organism or an entire universe established, than the process of its dissolution begins. To attempt to solve one Armageddon by putting

<sup>1</sup> "Essays," vol. ii. Green's Ed., p. 361.

X it in relation to another is scarcely hopeful. A whole which is a collection of suffering units cannot be gay. And the argument which consists in a perpetual postponement of advantages only makes God the Everlasting Jesuit. Voltaire met Leibnitz and other bovine optimists by exclaiming :—

Et vous composerez dans ce chaos fatal  
Des malheurs de chaque être un bonheur général !<sup>1</sup>

The truth is that in this great 'bull-fight of egoisms' of which nature is the scene, the ultimate fact appears to be the purposelessness of purpose.

Let us illustrate once more these antinomies of design by an instance taken from parasitic life. We are told that one of the main functions of bacteria is "The causation of disease in other organisms, particularly in man and the higher animals."<sup>2</sup> In other words certain bacteria are not fulfilling their duty unless they are making havoc of the human body, since that is the purpose for which they exist. I am not ignorant of the fact that there are harmless and even indispensable bacteria, such as those used in fermentation.<sup>3</sup> Indeed this theory of the

<sup>1</sup> Œuvres complètes, vol. viii. p. 397. Paris, Hachette.

<sup>2</sup> Fischer, *op. cit.* p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Jörgensen. "Micro-Organisms and Fermentation." Macmillan and Co., 1900.

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conflict of design requires emphasis to be laid as much on the one side as on the other. I look upon the world as a system of almost equally balanced forces. Processes of reparation are going on simultaneously with processes of destruction. Thus within the human body there is an army of minute organisms, known as leucocytes, whose function it is to absorb and destroy any poisonous matter which may have entered the system. Sometimes they fail and sometimes they succeed, but it is with the fact of opposed functions that we are here concerned. And it is strange to find that, whereas plants are able to protect themselves from bacteria "by closing their wounds from below by impenetrable layers of cork in such a way that they cut off from bacteria the fluids by which they are nourished,"<sup>1</sup> animals have no such power. On the contrary, "In animals the blood and lymph that exude from a wound form a richly nutritive medium for the growth of the bacteria, which can thus penetrate into the tissues and set up infection localised or general as the case may be."<sup>2</sup> But every toxine has its antitoxine. Every organism attempts to produce, and often succeeds in producing, within itself an antitoxine for each toxine which enters it. Bacteria and

<sup>1</sup> Fischer, *op. cit.* p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 145.

leucocytes fight. This duel of poisons and antidotes is one of the most extraordinary facts in chemistry, but its principle extends far beyond chemistry, into every organic process known to the human mind. The familiar phrase "Every poison has its antidote," may also be expressed "Every antidote has its poison," and it contains the fundamental fact of nature. For those minute organisms, those toxines and antitoxines, are mimicking on a small scale the horseplay of all the great natural forces, dissolution, earthquake, and storm. It is this vigorous and corrosive negative which poisons nature through and through, yet it is a poison which must be accepted as an indispensable factor in the process. But we can discover no ultimate purpose in the process, and the principle of design, so far from throwing light on the problems of nature, only darkens them.

We are, perhaps, now in a position to doubt the old view according to which the only evil doer in the universe is man. For although, as we have seen, owing to his attainment of an acute self-consciousness, man has become, or seems to himself to have become, different from nature, yet she holds the roots and climbings of his desires. Only a timid and inaccurate thinker like Rousseau would have concentrated his whole doctrine into the single belief that

## THE TRAGEDY OF EXISTENCE 65

*man* is the disturbing element in creation, and the sum of all evil.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, man is the victim. Nature invades him, and carries her guerrilla warfare into his very soul. He is caught in the maelstrom just like other organic beings. And the principle which we have been trying to elucidate, namely, that Nature works by means of opposed purposes, reappears, we shall see, with startling force, and works strange devastation in human consciousness and in history.

Meantime it only remains to point out that the physical basis of man's life is likewise subjected to the workings of that unalterable law. The old theory, according to which the human body was a single unit, has been abandoned. For by means of Virchow's wonderful researches in cellular pathology it has been proved that the body is an aggregate of cells, each of which leads its own life and leads it sometimes in dangerous independence of the rest.<sup>2</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> See especially a letter to Voltaire. *Œuvres Complètes de J. J. Rousseau*, Paris, 1836, vol. iv. p. 239. "Je ne vois pas qu'on puisse chercher la source du mal moral ailleurs que dans l'homme." See also "Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes."

<sup>2</sup> "Die Neueren Fortschritte in der Wissenschaft," Berlin 1898, p. 9. Virchow says: "Die höheren Organismen besitzen eben kein einheitliches Leben. . . . Jeder Theil eines lebenden Organismus hat sein besonderes Leben, seine *Vita propria*." That is to say, "Not one of the higher organisms can be considered as a unity . . . Every part of a living organism carries on its own life separately."

fact, the body like the social community has only sufficient cohesion to keep it together so as to form a basis for separate activities. The human organism is not merely not a unit, but the number of its constituent parts (*Bestandtheile*) is inconstant.<sup>1</sup> Within it there goes on a perpetual strife of cells.<sup>2</sup> Now, surely such facts as these, which are of vast psychological and pathological significance, must be taken into account by any one who wishes to avoid superficial judgments on mankind. A writer on human nature is no longer to be tolerated as an authority who is ignorant of the physical foundation of moral phenomena, or who is too great a coward, or too great a fool, to see that there may be a pathological parallelism between psychological and physical states.<sup>3</sup> When we consider that the brain like the body is no fixed unit, but contains independent centres, we begin to perceive that human consciousness may be only like a great amorphous deep through which contradictory currents are for ever flowing. But what a light such a conception throws on the history of the world and on the history of crime!

One of the most extraordinary discoveries in

<sup>1</sup> Virchow, *op. cit.* p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. "Gamophagie," Von "Josef Müller," Stuttgart, 1892, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> I shall return to this subject later.

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embryology is the fact that the struggle for existence actually takes place among the male and female elements which form the embryo.<sup>1</sup> This is, perhaps, the deepest fact in human knowledge, a fact so deep that it is an abyss. The organism arises out of molecules whose diameters are between  $\frac{1}{1,000,000}$  and  $\frac{1}{10,000,000}$  of a millimetre; and these molecules already decide its character by a struggle in which some conquer and others perish. I cannot discuss such details here. I am only anxious to show that in the very core, and on the threshold, too, of man's being this law of dual design is still active.<sup>2</sup> As we go on reducing all our conceptions to their simple elements we come at last upon the ultimate fact, which is—antithesis. The moment of development of a cell is the moment of fission.<sup>3</sup> And this law of fission

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lucretius.

Et commiscendo quom semine forte virili  
Femina vim vicit subita vi corripuit que,  
Tum similes matrum materno semine fiunt,  
Ut patribus patrio.—Book iv. ll. 1209-1212.

<sup>2</sup> The reader who wishes to acquaint himself with this extraordinary subject should read *Gamophagie*, Von "Josef Muller," Stuttgart, 1892, Weismann's *Amphimixis*, Jena, 1891, *Die Vererbung*, 1892, and such books as "The Evolution of Sex," by Geddes and Thomson. This question is not affected by the controversy as to the transmission of acquired characters.

<sup>3</sup> The laws of "gemination" are not inconsistent with this general statement.

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extends from the most primitive cell throughout the universe. All that we can know is the everlasting anabasis and katabasis of things. And we shall see that the moral life, and the facts of history, and of art and of religion, are intelligible only when we understand them as the expression of duel and dissonance. The work of science has been only the extension of the thought that lies beneath the Zend-Avesta. When man thinks that he has subdued the world to his desires, and that Nature is his settled kingdom in which he can displace natural values by spiritual values, I always seem to hear great voices mocking him from below, telling him that he will see clearly only when he sees *double* !

**PART II**

**THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX**



## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX

MORAL pedants, then, and those who attack moral problems without considering the myriad non-moral forces which stream in and converge upon man, the million instincts that lie behind him and through which the ancestors of his ancestors' ancestors fought and staggered, are only blind and profitless teachers. For whoever attempts to judge this mysterious being, the last point in an interminable line of biological change, without perceiving that the roots of his conscious life rise out of unconscious foundations, portentously deep and portentously foul, will not really judge but only misjudge him. Unless the task of ethics is to be a task fit only for policemen it must be made to begin at the point where the non-moral and the moral meet. For they are for ever meeting and reacting, and it is at that point that all the interest lies. There is an Embryology of Ethics. And if the philosopher is to be something more than a policeman he must not be

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X compelled to judge human beings and the springs of their conduct from a policeman's point of view. It is not likely, for instance, that we shall receive any illumination on this dark science of man from vulgar optimists, narrow clergymen, magistrates, merchants, schoolmasters, and the writers of romance. These people, if they think at all, think in toys and worn-out symbols, and go through the evolutions of the Kindergarten of knowledge as if they supposed they were making important contributions to human thought. Has it ever occurred to them that that portion of the universe, which possesses consciousness, is infinitesimal compared with that portion which really *governs* but remains inarticulate? Or that around and beneath this rattle of human words and the phantom universe of our conceptions and beliefs, lies the great Inane of Nature pressing on us from all sides? No one appears to perceive that intellectual cowardice is as disreputable as physical cowardice. And so we are asked to give thanks for Nature and sings psalms over her. It is like singing psalms to a triumphant beast (*Bestia Trionfante*). On the contrary, every writer of depth of insight and of passion has felt and written the way the writer of the Book of Job wrote and felt when he saw the light fleeing before him as he went

down beneath the pit and darkness of human knowledge. Throughout that extraordinary book man is portrayed as a being surrounded by a host of forces too strong for him and driving him as he flees through fleeing scenery towards fleeing goals. Job seems to hear for ever the echoes of infernal footsteps going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it.<sup>1</sup> With strange naïve penetration he asks : "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"<sup>2</sup> The same spirit reappears, but less vividly, and, on the whole, less tragically, in the Book of Proverbs, in which, nevertheless, all the forces that beckon men to ruin are figured in a Mysterious Hostess, whose "guests are in the depths of Hell."<sup>3</sup> And if we turn to the Book of Leviticus we shall find another amazing picture of the struggle of the human mind to grasp the meaning of evil. I know nothing more weird, more full of terror and dark phantasy than the strange law of Azazel, the scapegoat. The high priest was bidden to take two goats on the great Day of Atonement and "to cast lots upon the two goats ; one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat."<sup>4</sup> The one was sacrificed to the God of Abraham, but the

<sup>1</sup> Book of Job, ch. i. v. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ch. xiv. v. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Book of Proverbs, ch. ix. v. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Leviticus ch. xvi. v. 8.

and see the jokes: the 1st was  
killed, the 2nd was chased

other was sent out living "into the wilderness" as an offering to conciliate the Spirit of Evil.<sup>1</sup> I think I see that lonely beast let loose some dark and windy night and sent wandering into the windy and waste places to the Dark Power, rude symbol of the human spirit as it searches who shall be its god among the many gods of the desolate and desert places of this world! The old mythologies are full of this feeling of the compulsion of evil, and the human soul raised altars to "The Strong One," "The Hostile One," not first out of desire but out of fear. It is this oscillation of spiritual forces which is, too, the central fact in the consciousness of the Middle Ages. In early Christian theology, for instance, it appears under the startling form of a belief in the necessity of a payment made to Lucifer of the blood of Christ. The spirit of ✓ the old mythologies is not dead except in trivial minds. Any one who moves out of the trivial thought of to-day into the region of great mystery, which lies like a sea round the human soul, will meet strange perils and shapes! For what is man? What is this human soul, dim beleaguered metropolis, city of confusion and *città dolente*! Every deep mythology, every

<sup>1</sup> It is curious to notice that in the passage referred to the writer seems to tremble to name the Evil Principle. The beast is sent forth to the Great Unnamed.

deep religion, every deep mind that has looked into it, has discovered it to be an invaded and a war-smitten thing. It is only a vile, commercial, and sordid age which regards God and the Hostile One as extinct Monsters of belief. Extinct! They are terribly alive, and are struggling day and night for the human soul. The Devil, at least, as we saw in the first part, has a scientific basis. Destroyer and Redeemer, these are the middle facts in the consciousness of man, and they lie hidden, nay, they lie glaring in all law, all art, all science, all ethics. Open the Zend-Avesta at the Vendîdâd, and read the dialogue between Ahura Mazda and Zoroaster. For every creation of the Good Spirit there is, we are told, a "counter creation" by "Angra Mainyu, who is all death."<sup>1</sup> The world is described as a series of opposed forces which culminate in the two supreme opposites, Life and Death. "The third of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created was the strong holy Mûuru. Therefore came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created plunder and sin."<sup>2</sup> Man's body and its lusts, "the brands wherewith Angra Mainyu stamps the

<sup>1</sup> "The Zend-Avesta," Part I. Darmesteter's Translation, p. 3, note 2. Oxford 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

bodies of mortals" are only part of the sport of creation.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, if we look into the best modern thought we shall find that every vivid modern mind has accepted this perpetual dualism of things, this holy or, rather, this unholy war in which, to use a phrase of Lucretius, the soul is "scattered." The thing which pleases me most in modern literature is a certain dialogue of Leopardi, in which Nature and an inhabitant of Iceland are made to speak. The Icelandic has been attempting to flee from Nature (*sono un povero Islandese, che vo fuggendo la Natura*),<sup>2</sup> but he finds her everywhere from the Poles to the Tropics. At last he takes courage and addresses her and looks into her face which is beautiful and terrible (*di volto mezzo tra bello e terribile*). He complains to her of his physical and spiritual sufferings, and asks why she remains huge and indifferent. He points out that he perceives the fact that pain is a necessity (*ci è destinato e necessario il patire*), but would like an explanation of it. And why should life consist in a long preparation for maturity, which no sooner reached marks the beginning of the deepening tragedy of

<sup>1</sup> "The Zend-Avesta," Part I. Darmesteter's Translation, p. 17. Abriman desires these things "to be immortal for the destruction of the world."

<sup>2</sup> Opere di Giacomo Leopardi, Firenze, 1889, p. 271, vol. i.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 77

age?<sup>1</sup> In reply, Nature tells him that the happiness of the human race would be the last thing she would think of, and that if the whole species were suddenly annihilated she would scarcely be aware of it (*se anche mi avvenisse di estinguere tutta la vostra specie, io non me ne avvedrei*). I exist, she says, only for the sake of a perpetual process of production and destruction.

Now such a theory of life is not more exaggerated or more darkly coloured than Pascal's. If we seek the cause of the extraordinary depth of Pascal's pessimism we shall find that it, too, rises in the first place out of a vivid perception of the antagonism between the spirit of man and the spirit of nature. Over and over again Pascal uses the word "le néant" to describe human life. He looks upon man as a being isolated in the midst of a vast scheme which is indifferent to him. We are suspended, he says, between the abyss of the infinitely great and the infinitely little (*suspendu entre ces deux abîmes*). The infinite threatens man on one side and *le néant* on the other, and his place is between the two poles of ignorance and of knowledge. Moreover, his natural condition is

<sup>1</sup> Opere di Giacomo Leopardi, p. 276. "Appena un terzo della vita degli uomini è assegnato al fiorire, pochi istanti alla maturità e perfezione, tutto il rimanente allo scadere e agl' incomodi che ne seguono."

the most opposed to his desires. Human life, says Pascal, is a perpetual illusion.<sup>1</sup> The conditions of knowing and of feeling are such that man can never arrive at certitude by his own efforts (*Rien ne lui montre la vérité; tout l'abuse*).<sup>2</sup> In fact, no sceptic ever employed a stronger invective against human destiny than is to be found in the writings of Pascal. His moral scepticism is absolute (*on ne voit presque rien de juste ou injuste qui ne change de qualité en changeant de climat*).<sup>3</sup> Moral theory, he says, must for ever be in a state of uncertainty.<sup>4</sup> The natural condition of mankind is mutual hatred.<sup>5</sup> And he describes human experience finally thus: *Condition de l'homme; inconstance, ennui inquiétude*.<sup>6</sup> It is true that Pascal gave up the whole problem aghast, and went trembling on the roads of belief. We shall see later if this is possible for the modern mind. But meantime let us notice that both Leopardi and Pascal detected the shallowness of the doctrine that man will find repose at last in himself. They were psychologists of too great skill to believe anything of the sort.

<sup>1</sup> See especially the passage beginning 'Car enfin qu'est ce que l'homme dans la nature?' "Pensées." Edition Paris, 1844, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 105.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 79

Even on the threshold of the second part of the "Pensees," which contains his religious hopes, Pascal says deliberately that those who, cheated by nature, expect to find their well-being *within* themselves, are fools.<sup>1</sup>

Both Leopardi and Pascal, however, were content to make their own private feelings, their own personal disappointments and broken hopes, the basis of their psychology. Whether such a method is of universal scientific importance may be doubted. Neither the one nor the other attempted to discover any fundamental principle governing the mechanism of the moral life. They were conscious of the inexorable contradictions in human feeling, but they did not discover, or at least they did not state, the only principle through which those contradictions are to be explained. Pascal says that he approves only of those seekers after truth who, in seeking, groan inwardly (*Je ne puis approuver que ceux qui cherchent en gémissant*).<sup>2</sup> That, of course, is a matter of taste. What is really important is to discover the governing principle of the inner world. It would be strange, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 148. "Ainsi les philosophes ont beau dire. Rentrez en vous même, vous y trouverez votre bien ; on ne les croit pas : et ceux qui les croient sont les plus vides et les plus sots." As for Leopardi, it is this thought which is his *pensiero dominante*.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* page 50.

if that world had no laws or processes as capable of being formulated as the processes and laws of the outer world. On the contrary, I believe that the "moral" and the "immoral" life of man and the whole series of his sensations become intelligible only when we discover them to be an expression of that principle which we have already found to be dominant throughout Nature. In short, the inner life in all its forms, but especially in its perceptions of moral antithesis, is a miniature and mimic reproduction of the cosmos-chaos of the natural world, but with this difference, that the individual is his own battle-ground, and has become acutely conscious of the antagonism within him.

Now no matter what our theory of the origin of moral feeling happens to be, it is clear that the feeling itself consists in a perception of contrast between possible kinds of conduct. In fact, ethics begins in dichotomy. That is to say, a moral judgment depends on a statement of opposition or antagonism between actions or between motives. Every moral theory, indeed, is compelled to split the world in two and to discover a fissure running through history and individual lives. I will be the last to deny, to be sure, that the line which separates "good" from "bad" is an obscure and wavering line, or that an action which is morally good at

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 81

one moment may be bad at another. Thus, although it is a duty to speak the truth, we are allowed to tell lies to a dying man if the shock of the truth would hasten his death ; and we are expected to deceive madmen and infants if the truth would render them dangerous or do them harm. The helplessness of irreflective opinion when brought face to face with such contradictions has been discussed by many writers, and there is no single moral rule, which, if considered as absolute, does not when analysed tumble to pieces.<sup>1</sup> We are not concerned here, however, with the contradictions and the casuistry of moral practice, but rather with the ultimate and fundamental contradiction of all moral feeling whatever. We are concerned with the strange paradox that the "moral life" is unintelligible apart from the presupposition of the "immoral life," that a "virtue" depends not merely for its precision, but for its meaning and its existence on its opposed "vice" ; and that just as "yes" is unintelligible apart from "no," "good" is unintelligible apart from "bad." Such twin conceptions are born together, and are so organically related in human thought, that if the one

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sidgwick's "Methods of Ethics," especially Book III. ch. xi. See also Schopenhauer's "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung." Leipzig, 1891, vol. i. p. 401.

disappears the other must disappear also. This is not merely an affair of words which, after all, are only the upholstery of ideas. It is a fundamental fact.<sup>1</sup> If the conceptions of all the vices and sins known to the human soul were to perish out of it to-morrow, the conceptions of all the virtues would likewise perish. Goodness is unintelligible without a background of wickedness. But the converse is also true, because a vice has meaning only on account of the virtue opposed to it. This is the ridiculous paradox which lies at the foundation of human consciousness, and when stated in a bold way bewilders common minds. No new virtue could be invented until a new vice had been invented. Moral feeling, in short, means the dramatisation of consciousness. To say that if a virtue is to exist and to be intelligible, a corresponding vice must exist, either in imagination or in reality, sounds monstrous and momentous, but it is the truth, which lies at the bottom of ethics. It is a truth which appears to have troubled St. Paul, who expresses it in the "Epistle to the Romans" in the most naïve way. His statement that "sin is not imputed when there is no law"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "In der That würde nie von Recht geredet worden sein, gäbe es kein Unrecht." Schopenhauer's "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung." Leipzig, vol. i. p. 420.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter v. verse 13.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 83

means in modern language that it is law which creates the idea of crime. He approaches still nearer the paradox, however, when, after having pointed out that had it not been for "sin" "grace" never would have appeared in the world, he asks pathetically, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"<sup>1</sup> His answer to such a question is, of course, a foregone conclusion, but the mere statement of it is enough to betray the insoluble moral enigma which the human soul contains. For the more corrosive and terrible the moral poison the greater the victory of the antidote. But the antidote is meaningless and without effect apart from the poison it attempts to destroy. In Christian dogma "grace" could have no meaning apart from "sin." For His great position in history Christ has to thank the dogma of the sin of the world. Thus, too, in describing a virtue we can describe it, point by point, only by reference to its antagonistic vice, and conversely. A "pure" man is said to be

<sup>1</sup> Chapter vi. verse i. There is evidence that St. Paul's treatment of the problem had not satisfied his co-religionists. In the 8th verse of the third chapter he complains of being misunderstood, as if he had said, "Let us do evil that good may come." St. Paul's admirable but inconclusive statement of the paradox seems to have alarmed the primitive church. He complains of having been "slanderosly reported," but it cannot be said that there is no ground for misunderstanding. Instead of removing the dilemma he intensifies it.

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all that an "impure" man is not, and so on, through all the virtues. It is like the perpetual antithesis of health and disease. Pathology and physiology both presuppose each other. And so, too, in the ultimate analysis of all moral conceptions "difference" means relation. I do not mean that "good" and "bad" are identified, but that each depends for its meaning on an antagonistic relation, just as between two people who hate each other there is some common ground of contempt. Every moral conception has a counter conception, and every negation has a constructive function. Poets like Herbert may exaggerate, and say that "man is all symmetry," but unless he had asymmetrical elements how could he know symmetry? How could we prize wisdom unless there were fools? or honest men unless there were dishonest, or cleanliness if there were no dirt? The saint and the hero are unintelligible without the sinner and the coward. The abnegation of the saint is understood because contrasted with the voluptuousness of the sinner, and we call the hero brave because we find in him everything which is absent in the coward. It is the dark arras of the world which allows all the holy and sweet things of life to appear and shine. All our conceptions are semi-detached. And, as a



## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 85

moral touchstone, evil is as necessary as good. When evil is chronic in you, you cease to be interesting. You are most interesting when neither virtue nor vice is chronic in you, but when you live in spasms of the one and the other and in a struggle back and forward between each. And this is the natural state of the human soul. Human consciousness is divided into two heaps: Right and wrong, wisdom and folly, corruption and incorruption, justice and injustice, mortal and immortal, good and evil, God and devil. These are the poles of its beliefs and its unbeliefs. We can never get away from these divisions, and this inner fission of the soul. Height is an inverted depth. Depth has no meaning without height. How the height nods down to the depth and beckons and belongs to it ! It is not surprising that Christ wished to cast Himself down from the pinnacles of the Temple; or that the Saints in the blind vertigo of their ecstasy, felt that they were never so near the abyss as when on terrible heights where there is no room to move. In the Tyrol I climbed intolerable mountains, and stood on peaks of pure ice, but I never felt nearer the abyss. The law of the potential energy of descent of falling bodies is applicable to the moral life. And as man climbs this giddy rigging of his fate he is nearer than ever the deep sea of all

error, which swims like a moving pit beneath him. When we are in Hell we are nearest God. Let no vulgar mind misunderstand me. Or, rather, let all the vulgar minds misunderstand me; it will be a sign that I have respoken a great truth—"Though I make my bed in Hell, Thou art there!"—But surely I have said enough to prove even to the feeblest intellect that, whether invited or uninvited, Evil must for ever be a guest in the human soul.

It is this; there is no marrying "yes" and "no," and yet they go to bed with each other every night in the human soul.

Recently a loud and hysterical thinker, Nietzsche, made an attempt to get "beyond good and evil," and to prove that man's moral judgments rest on frail foundations; but he gives us no real reason for it. I believe, on the contrary, that the modern consciousness can never get beyond good and evil, even although it were proved that the distinction is artificial. As a matter of fact it is in our blood. In the two books in which Nietzsche attempted to discuss the question of moral opposites he never arrived at the heart of the matter at all, but only philosophised in picturesque invective.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The books to which I refer are "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," Leipzig, 1899; and "Genealogie der Moral," Leipzig, 1894. See also "Morgenröthe" and "Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft."

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 87

He begins by saying, "We ought, in the first place, to doubt whether there are any such things as antitheses (*Gegensätze*).<sup>1</sup> But his only serious attempt to answer that question consists in this statement of another: "What forces us in general to believe that there is an essential opposition (*einen wesenhaften Gegensatz*) between 'true' and 'false'? Is it not sufficient to accept *degrees* of reality, lighter and darker shadows, *as it were*,<sup>2</sup> different tones and colour values, to use the language of a painter?" But this is simply the same problem expressed in another way, for the degrees of a colour imply the extremes of it. Shadow implies light, and so we are again at the point from which we started. Indeed all that Nietzsche did was to offer a sterile etymological criticism of morals. He carries on his analysis

The reader will readily perceive that I object to the doctrine of Nietzsche, not on so-called "moral grounds" but rather for the sake of preserving the paradox and dilemma of "moral" theory. Nietzsche talks a great deal about psychology, but I do not think he was a great psychologist. He did not see that the psychology of the moral life offers the best weapons for the discomfiture of "moralists." He invariably approached philosophical questions from the point of view of a philologist. His analysis is almost always verbal, but I do not deny, of course, that his spasmodic brain had great flashes of insight. His "philosophy" is really the impatience of a poet.

<sup>1</sup> "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> "Gleichsam." This word betrays the shakiness and the shallowness of the whole sentence.

at a break-neck pace, and misses all the important points on his way. As a matter of fact, although he rejects the antithesis of "good" and "evil," he does retain "true" and "false." For he states that what distinguishes the mob from the aristocrats is that the mob are liars (*Es ist ein Grund glaube aller Aristokraten dass das gemeine Volk lügernisch ist*).<sup>1</sup> And he agrees with the aristocrats. Instead of "good" he uses the word "high class" (*Vornehm*) and instead of "evil" he uses the word "contemptible" (*Verächtlich*). But is there no antithesis between these conceptions? I have considerable sympathy, indeed, with an attempt to discover an æsthetic basis of morals, and if Nietzsche had seriously laid his hand to that task he would have had an important place in the history of human thought. But although he undoubtedly possessed such a conception it appears blurred throughout his whole work, and his work bears traces of a hopelessly unsynthetic mind. Moreover, in any case, it is not possible to escape the antithesis by stating it in an æsthetic form, since beauty presupposes ugliness. In æsthetics there is a series of contrasts as vivid as in morals. In another weak passage Nietzsche attempts to

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 240. This is inconsistent with his doctrine of the "Umwertung aller Werthe."

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 89

escape the dilemma by saying that the idea of evil is opposed to the idea of good only as a *temporary* counter-image (*Contrastbild*) for the sake of a greater emphasis on the positive side.<sup>1</sup> As if this is not just the whole truth. The counter-image is always renewed. It matters little to me which is called positive and which negative. The one indisputable fact is that the one is unintelligible without the other. Nietzsche still speaks of "depth" and "height," but he does not see that he is making use merely of the same psychological material under different imagery. I agree with the statement, which he took from Schopenhauer, that there are really no moral phenomena but only moral interpretations of phenomena.<sup>2</sup> That is the whole point. The birth of self-consciousness and the nature of the human mind necessitate a qualitative interpretation of the facts of Nature. And if Nietzsche had studied the human soul less impatiently and more profoundly, he would have seen that so far from being superficial man's moral conceptions are the deep articulate symbolism of the constructive and the destructive forces which he discovers around him and within him. The dualism of design, which is so fearfully active in

<sup>1</sup> "Genealogie der Moral," p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," p. 100.

Nature, reappears in the human soul and finds expression in its struggle between moral opposites and in the poles and phases of men's beliefs. Morality is a criticism of existence and an attempt on the part of man, the dissatisfied spectator, to stay the havoc of things and to stem the tides of them. Whether good and evil, beauty and ugliness, are a mirage of the soul it matters nothing. Every mirage is real for the soul. And every moral judgment is a frantic effort to affirm the reality of one side of the universe and the illusion (*Nichtigkeit*) of the other. It is only a deeper analysis, which shows that this "other" must also be real. Nietzsche professed to have read and to have admired La Rochefoucauld. But he had not read him to advantage. Like all keen moralists La Rochefoucauld detected the paradox of the moral life. "Nul ne mérite d'être loué de sa bonte," he says, "s'il n'a pas la force d'être méchant."<sup>1</sup> This maxim presupposes my entire ethics. Had Nietzsche attacked the moral problem from within, and had he shown that all moral theory rests on an ambiguous basis and contains a paradox which it cannot explain, his philosophical nihilism would have been perfect. But he works from the outside, and never meets the moralist on the moralist's own ground. The

<sup>1</sup> "Maximes." Sainte Beuve's edition. Garnier, Paris, p. 54.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 91

philosophical nihilist, however, ought to be a sapper and miner, and work from within outwards and from below upwards.

Whether, therefore, we accept Kant's view that the distinction between good and evil is qualitative and absolute, or Aristotle's that it is only quantitative, the necessity of both poles of the moral life can never be in dispute. Kant severely criticised the Aristotelian theory that virtue is a Mean between two excesses, a sort of middle degree of the moral thermometer between the freezing-point of asceticism and the boiling-point of passion.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, Kant discovers the moral principle in an absolute affirmation or negation of opposed states of the will, and says that the aim of moral theory is to prove not so much that man possesses virtue as that virtue possesses man.<sup>2</sup> Although, however, Aristotle denied that moral feeling is innate, and pointed out that it is an acquirement, rather, an affair of habit and experience, yet his famous doctrine of the Mean rises out of a perception of moral antithesis and

<sup>1</sup> Kant says, "Der Unterschied der Tugend vom Laster kann nie in Graden der Befolgung gewisser Maximen, sondern muss allein in der specifischen Qualität derselben (dem Verhältniss zum Gesetz) gesucht werden; mit andern Worten, der belobte Grundsatz (des Aristoteles) die Tugend in der Mittleren zwischen zwei Lastern zu setzen ist falsch." "Metaphysik der Sitten," p. 239. Leipzig, 1870.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 242.

contradiction.<sup>1</sup> For a Mean is unintelligible apart from two extremes, and Aristotle divides the soul into (1) rational and (2) irrational elements. The *origin* of the feelings of right and of wrong does not concern us here, however. No matter what their origin is their paradox remains. We are concerned with the absurdity which dogs the steps of every moralist, namely, that in order that there may be an ethical theory at all a state of imperfection must exist. The vigour of a virtue is called forth because there is a vice to suppress. In whichever way the moral problem is stated this stumbling stone remains fixed. The attempt, for instance, to neutralise the moral contradiction by defining virtue as knowledge results only in a verbal and not in an essential change. The dispute between Aristotle and Kant, and between utilitarians and intuitionists, generally appears to me, therefore, to be of no importance. Whether we look upon the moral life as a God-given gift, or as a slow efflorescence of man's own spirit, we cannot escape the contradiction that it appears in the world by virtue of

<sup>1</sup> "Nicomachean Ethics," Book II., Williams' Translation p. 29. Longmans, 1879. Aristotle's argument that were moral feeling "innate" man could not avoid being moral is not inconsistent with the theory that both poles of the moral life are necessary and fundamental in human nature. For it could be shown that they have a logical basis.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 93

the world's disorder. No matter where "good" comes from, "evil" comes with it. Like the poor of the Gospel the devil must always be with us. There would be no virtues to classify at all if there were no vices. Kant, indeed, was conscious of these fundamental contradictions in human thought, and his philosophy is nothing but a great attempt to reconcile them. He reconciled them by looking at man both as a natural and as a supernatural being. We cannot follow him, however, in a line of thought which has more importance for the consistency of the Kantian system itself than for the fundamental problem in ethics. In his desire to reconcile freedom with necessity Kant even went so far as to say that, although a man's actions could all be foretold and their causal connection stated, he could yet be considered as free.<sup>1</sup> It reminds one of Molina. The real difficulty, however, is a double one. It is not merely that, as Kant admits, the human will is influenced by forces external to it (*vom Strom der Naturnothwendigkeit*), but that there reigns within the moral world itself an unsolved and insoluble enigma. This enigma consists in the fact that we cannot conceive human thought, and especially moral feeling, as possible at all

<sup>1</sup> See especially, "Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft," p. 119. Leipzig, 1897.

except under its actual conditions—that is to say, except as a perpetual movement between affirmation and negation. It is the inward chaos which makes ethics possible at all.

Kant, indeed, made an attempt to face the paradox in the boldest and most straightforward way. He points out that the idea of Good and Evil arises not merely out of experience, but that it is born at the birth of knowledge. It is not merely a question of the contrast of well-being with misery (*Wohl und Weh*) which are only sensations, he says, but it is a question of the opposition of Good and Evil (*Gut und Böse*) which are not sensations but ideas.<sup>1</sup> Kant, indeed, goes so far as to imply that the idea of evil is an idea of reason, although in his work on “Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason,” he refuses to say so in plain words.<sup>2</sup> But he admits that there is an inner disruption of reason. For he is not content to show that the ultimate contrasts in human knowledge are fixed in feeling merely (*blosse Empfindung*), but that they are fixed in the very heart of all thought. Whenever Kant says that an idea may be discovered in the maxims which the soul gives itself or finds within itself, he means

<sup>1</sup> Cf. “Kritik der Prak. Vernunft,” p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. “Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft,” Ed. Leipzig, 1875 p. 39.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 95

that the idea is essential and universal, and this is what he says of the evil principle. Kant, of course, pauses and hesitates in the midst of these difficulties, and contradicts himself more than once. But in his work on "Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason," which came later than his two great ethical treatises, there are many passages in which he announces the organic relation which subsists between moral opposites.<sup>1</sup> In the most lucid manner possible, he says that the ideas of good and evil have a basis in reason.<sup>2</sup> And in his later work he assigned to evil a positive value. In an important note, he points out that evil is not only a condition of want or deficiency (*Mangel*), but also a positive ground and source of activity. He treats the problem mathematically, and shows that if Good =  $a$ , Evil =  $-a$  and not merely 0.<sup>3</sup> Kant's wisdom in assigning, like Schopenhauer, a positive and essential reality to evil, may no doubt harass

<sup>1</sup> One of the most important passages is the following: "Das Böse hat nur aus dem Moralisch-Bösen (nicht den blossen Schranken unserer Natur) entspringen können; und doch ist die ursprüngliche Anlage (die auch kein Anderer als der Mensch selbst verderben konnte, wenn diese Korruption ihm soll zugerechnet werden) eine Anlage zum Guten." "Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft," p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. "Kritik der Prak. Vernunft," p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. "Die Religion," p. 23. "Im letztern Falle kann das Nichtgute auch das positive Böse heissen."

and bewilder small minds ; but we are not concerned with the timidity and hysteria of half educated and meagre intellects. We are concerned with the inexorable facts of human consciousness. Knowledge, in short, is a twin birth. Kant uses the strongest possible language to prove this everlasting fact. Evil and good share the lease of the human soul. Kant speaks of the "Einwohnung" of evil, which means that it is an "Einwohner" or inhabitant, sort of irremovable tenant and rack-renter of the human soul ! He objects to the theory that men are either good or bad ; they are both good and bad, he says (*zum Theil gut, zum Theil böse*).<sup>1</sup> Kant fights hard with the paradox, and often shifts his ground.<sup>2</sup> But the fact that he does so is an indirect proof of the baffling and insoluble nature of the moral problem which made so great a mind as Kant's pause and stagger. Although he saw perhaps more deeply than any other philosopher into the psychology of the moral duel, he never permitted himself to believe that the human soul is a double

<sup>1</sup> "Die Religion," p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> On Kant's inconsistencies, see "The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant," by Edward Caird, Maclehose, 1889, vol. ii. Book II. ch. ii. Although I had the great privilege of studying Kant under the guidance of Prof. Caird, I am not able to accept the constructive criticism which he builds out of the Kantian system.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADOX 97

centred thing. His theory of knowledge and his hunger for "unity" necessitated him to be as far as possible consistent with himself. And so it is not surprising when at last he says that the moral law must not be determined by the conception of Good and Evil, but that those conceptions must be determined by the moral law.<sup>1</sup> But how can the moral law, or any law whatever, be stated at all if there is nothing to state? The moral law, if it is not to be utterly empty, must presuppose its own contents, and those contents are nothing but the ideas of Good and Evil. How can a judgment be made without predicates? Good and Evil are the highest generalisations of the human mind, and the moral law must wait for them, and is meaningless without them.

Thus, although Kant stated that "the only objects of moral theory are the conceptions of Good and Evil,"<sup>2</sup> he can hardly be said to have solved the paradox which the statement hides. When he attempted, for instance, to discuss any particular form of "Evil," he was

<sup>1</sup> Kant says it is the task of the moralist to show that "der Begriff des Guten und Bösen nicht vor dem Moralischen Gesetze (dem er dem Anschein nach sogar zum Grunde gelegt werden müsste) sondern nur (wie hier auch geschieht) nach demselben und durch dasselbe bestimmt werden müsse." *Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft*, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 69.

too anxious to be on the side of conventional opinion.<sup>1</sup> For Kant did not see that a moralist must necessarily be a pathologist.

Those, then, who penetrate into the last recesses of human thought are met by this disquieting moral enigma. It has harassed all those idealists who have been anxious to prove that the universe is a harmony and a unity, and has forced them to admit that whatever happens in the long line of causes and effects must be justified. Evil is a stage in the production of Good, they say. But if so, what is the nature of the condemnation to be passed upon it? It is part of the scaffolding of things. The interminable theological controversy regarding God's foreknowledge and the so-called freedom of the human will is only another form of the paradox which lies buried in all knowledge. No thinker of any eminence has missed the discovery that this inner contradiction of the moral consciousness is the most significant fact in a philosophical interpretation of human life. Bold men like

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, his treatment of "Selbstschändung" in "Metaphysik der Sitten." I am aware, of course, that Kant came into collision with official orthodoxy on the publication of his essay on the "Inherence of the Evil Principle in the Good" in 1792. But in the preface to the second edition of the completed work he does his best to put himself right with the theologians. Cf. "Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft." Ed. Leipzig, 1875, p. 14.

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Spinoza solved it in their own way. But every generation re-discovers the problem, which remains insoluble. Schleiermacher, for instance, made a frantic attempt to believe that Evil is only a vanishing illusion, "a fleeing contradiction," as he called it. He refuses to regard Evil as an ethical idea at all, and says that in the construction of Ethics it ought to have no place!<sup>1</sup> And yet, on the same page, he is forced to admit that morality and moral theory presuppose a perpetual renewal and a perpetual abolition of the contradiction of Good and Evil.<sup>2</sup> But this is the surrender of pure idealism. For it does not matter whether, with Kant<sup>3</sup> and Christianity, we move from the idea of Evil to the idea of Good, or with Schleiermacher and other idealists from the idea of Good to the idea of Evil. It matters little in theory which side of the see-saw is up first. Schleiermacher, who, although influenced by the miserable *bourgeois* optimism of Hegel, was one of the profoundest minds of the last century, knew the world of

<sup>1</sup> "Philosophische Sittenlehre," Leipzig, 1870, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85. "Indem also die Sittenlehre das Handeln der Vernunft als ein mannigfaltiges auseinanderlegt, so ist sie (auch anzusehen als) ein sich immer erneuerendes Setzen und Aufheben des Gegensatzes von Gut und Böse."

<sup>3</sup> In "Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft," in which Kant states the moral problem in such a way as to connect it with the Christian view of man and the world.



practice too well to believe that it is susceptible only of an idealistic interpretation. As Kirchmann points out, he oscillates between two points of view. He says that in Ethics all we can ever know is a "mixed life" (*gemischtes Leben*).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the fact not merely that thinkers are in contradiction with themselves when they attempt to discover any absolute truth governing human life, but that from the dawn of thought there have been two independent streams of speculation which never mingle, casts a vivid light on the very theory which is here propounded. For it is an indirect proof of the incompatible elements in human psychology. Body and soul, as Schleiermacher says, are the most intense form of any contradiction known to us.<sup>2</sup>

But the great merit of Schleiermacher consists in his view of the moral life and the life of Reason generally as symbolism. "The entire outside world," he says, "is only the stuff for symbolism" (*der Stoff für die symbolisierende Thätigkeit*).<sup>3</sup> This is profoundly true, and it is the greatest contribution to ethical speculation in modern times. Schleiermacher, however, regarded the process of the universe as consist-

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> "Leib und Seele im Menschen ist die höchste Spannung des Gegensatzes," p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 169.



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ing in a gradual interfusion of "Nature" and "Reason" until a perfect unity is reached.<sup>1</sup> But, as we have seen, the only unity we know is a totality of contradictions. To be intelligible a unity can exist only in the midst of "difference." Schleiermacher asks in alarm, Are we to be Manichæists?<sup>2</sup> And the answer is, There is nothing else for us to be. Old Böhme went to the heart of the matter when he said: "In Yes and No all things subsist. The Yes is Life and Force, Truth or God Himself, but without the No He would be unknowable."<sup>3</sup> In short, the moral life is a symbolism of the two sorts of processes which go on in nature and in man, and each of which is inevitable. The idealist says that there can be no such thing as "unreason."<sup>4</sup> But, as we have seen already, there may be something much worse than "unreason," namely, two kinds of "reason," mutually destructive. There is not merely no "unreason" in nature (if you choose), there is a perpetual diabolism of reason. Outside man there is something slumbering and gigantic, something infernal and desolate and

<sup>1</sup> His formula is, "Ein Naturwerden der Vernunft und ein Vernunftwerden der Natur."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> *In Ja und Nein bestehen alle Dinge*, Werke, Stuttgart, 1885, vol. ii. p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Schleiermacher, *op. cit.* p. 84.



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inimical in Nature, but lo! it raises its head also  
X in his own soul. Man sprinkles in vain his  
spiritual disinfectants on Nature. She still rises  
about him in putrefactive heaps. He thinks he  
builds a wall against her, but it is a rickety and  
a tumbling wall. His discovery of right and  
wrong is an attempt to create a world of his  
own, but within that world there go on the same  
anarchic processes which he discovers outside  
him. For the processes of corruption and  
putrefaction are as natural and as inevitable in  
the moral world as in the world of Nature. As  
much ingenuity, as much "design," has been  
✓ spent on the brain of the great criminal as on  
the soul of the great saint. Even Kant, in a  
remarkable passage, seems to have been troubled  
by such a thought, because he puts the question,  
Is not greater strength of soul (*mehr stärke der  
Seele*) required for crime than for virtue?<sup>1</sup> If  
man turns within himself he will find, indeed,  
as much to bewilder him as he finds in Nature.  
For he is the mirror and mosaic of Nature.

It is a strange truth that moral disease and  
spiritual disorder are part of the world's assets.  
If men were to become morally and physically  
perfect to-morrow three great professions would  
be in beggary. Every form of degeneration, in  
short, seems to have a constructive as well as a

<sup>1</sup> "Metaphysik der Sitten," p. 216.

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destructive rôle, and it was early that the human race discovered the financial importance of Evil, and made it a permanent source of revenue. Codes of law, and the great religious books of the world, represent vested interests. It is a remarkable paradox that not merely the criminal, but his judge, lives by crime. Consider, too, the unconscious cynicism of the word "living" as applied to a clergyman's benefice. In fact, the word "benefice" itself contains as much delightful irony as any word in the language. It's an ill wind that blows nobody good! One of the most striking things in history is this perpetual accommodation of idealism to the raw facts of life. Christianity, for instance, has identified itself with almost every worldly movement.<sup>1</sup> It has become the religion of military states, and rifles and Bibles lie side by side. We have the extraordinary spectacle of Christian nations addressing the Christian Mars for victory, and after a great battle crowding the cathedrals for the *Te Deum*. The fact is that while ordinary consciousness expresses the truth admirably when it speaks of "the drama of history," it has not the courage to say that it requires the devil to make the drama march. For no drama could be made

<sup>1</sup> Saints, even, became patrons of the racecourse. Cf. the story of Italicus and St. Hilarion.

out of saints. The surprising thing is not that men have given up their belief in God, but that they have lost belief in the Prince of this world. I think it was Michelet who said that progress is invariably the work of the devil. At any rate, history is unintelligible without him. History is poisoned with discord, and is nothing but a movement of oscillation and collision. The essential character of the world is noise, movement, and change. We have only to look at it for a few moments to see that it is full of the witherings of things, and that if we wish to describe it truthfully we must use some such language as was used by Heraclitus long ago. Everything is see-saw. Life and death, light and darkness, night and day, to-morrow and to-morrow, and every yesterday, all prove that the only permanence in the universe is change. There is nothing but tides. And this tidal principle and tug of war is the chief fact in history and in the succession of human speculation and belief. It has been the burden of great dramatists, who saw that it is just because reality is itself dramatic that their own art is so impressive. It is not enough to say, as has been often said, that the history of the world is merely the history of the struggle between East and West, which is still vital at this day. It is the history of the struggle between everything

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and between everybody. Armageddon is the ultimate fact. You cannot take a step in history without discovering that everything splits in two. It is nothing but the record of pitched battles between opposed systems, dynasties, and beliefs. As there must always be at least two parties in the State, there have always been at any given moment at least two antagonistic movements, variously expressed or disguised, throughout the history of the world. History is unintelligible unless regarded as a vast conflict of wills. Feeble and undramatic minds who talk of divine movements in history ought to be made to study Goya. Then, perhaps, they might begin to talk about diabolical movements. A historian who has no perception of the nihilism in things will throw no light on the movement of mankind. We are concerned with something more than the mere millinery of things! We are concerned with their dark million webs. We are concerned with the hunger and ravin of nature which have become articulate in man, and with the increasing purposelessness of things. I can see no divine movement in pain and blood. I refuse to put on the loud pedal to that tune! History is a nightmare. Great empires rise and perish and describe only a great cycle of vanity, and death is in the blasts of their trumpets.

Think of the great generations once militant and furious, and now become only a surplus of ghosts !

The detractors of Machiavelli are persons who misunderstand him. They suppose that in his "Prince" he created a type, whereas the truth is that he only analysed a type already in existence. "The Prince" is the most accurate account that has ever been given of the sort of characters which have led the great political movements of the world. It is only the admirable concentration of Machiavelli's style that has caused him to be a stumbling-block to dull minds. He never amplifies his phrases, and he has no periphrases. He presents the truth of history and human conquest naked and unashamed. When, in the seventh chapter, after having described Borgia's policy in Northern Italy, Machiavelli says : "I can find no fault in him" (*Raccolte adunque tutte queste azioni del duca non saprei riprenderlo*), he is only expressing the truth with which his mind was full ; namely, that history is the expression of a teleology that is non-moral. A character like Borgia is simply like a natural force moving along its inevitable path. Machiavelli points out with irony that Biblical history is disguised politics, and that all that distinguishes Moses from other conquerors is the fact that his

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ambitions were under supernatural guidance.<sup>1</sup> Only "armed prophets," he tells us, ever succeed, and throughout his political writings he recurs to the fact that Christianity as early as possible became a military State, girt on the sword, and fought the world with worldly weapons. The fact that the Church possessed armies and bought gunpowder is the most ironical in the history of the world. It is Machiavelli's perception of the duel of historical forces which makes him one of the most important writers of Europe. If his portrait of Borgia is too highly coloured, the reason is that Borgia was only an exaggerated instance of a fundamental type in human character. Other political Liliputians are only Borgias on a small scale. In what way does Machiavelli's analysis of the mistakes of Louis XII. differ from the methods of any shrewd modern diplomatist who reads history with a view to practice? In "The Prince" he drags policies and politics to light. The theoretical part of his work, which has been understood as being didactic—a standard and code of political conduct—is only a rapid and concentrated generalisation on actual historical fact. It is a presentation of historical cause and effect. The use of the word "Machiavellianism"

<sup>1</sup> "Opere di Niccolò Machiavelli," Italia, 1813, vol. iv. p. 17.

irritates those who know that "Machiavellianism" existed before Machiavelli. If any one takes the trouble to read the instructions which the Signory gave to Machiavelli before he started on his various diplomatic missions, he will be forced to admit that this is true, and that Machiavelli's reflections rose out of the intrigue which was placed in his hands.<sup>1</sup> In short, Machiavelli's was the only brain in that age capable of discovering a law amid a heterogeneous mass of political fact. Guicciardini does not approach him in power of generalisation. And the law which Machiavelli discovered in his inquiry into the manifestations of the human will was the law of battle.<sup>2</sup>

Talleyrand, too, expressed the supreme fact of history when he said, in words which Bismarck often quoted, that the revolution is never dead. The human "cosmos" is the expression of the same laws of integration and dissolution which rule in the natural world. The French Revolution came like the outbreak of some

<sup>1</sup> See especially, *Opere*, vol. vi. pp. 53 and 365, in which Machiavelli is instructed in the play and counter-play of diplomatic intrigue before he started on his mission to the French King and the Papal Court.

<sup>2</sup> "Di che si cava una regola generale, la quale mai o di rado fallo, che chi è cagione che uno diventi potente rovina; perche quella potenza è causata da colui o con industria o con forza e l'una e l'altra di questi due è sospetta a chi è divenuto potente." *Il Principe*, *Opere*, vol. iv. p. 11

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fearful lust which had long been breathing and slumbering in secret. One of the unforgettable facts of the Revolution is that children paraded the streets with cats' heads stuck on poles. The blind sadism and barbarism of the human soul were never more vilely expressed. According to Taine, a certain M. Guillin, of Poleymieux, was cut in pieces and parts of his body were eaten.<sup>1</sup> The two main facts in the psychology of the Revolution are that it arose out of the passions of the stomach and of the brain (*les passions de l'estomac et de la cervelle*).<sup>2</sup> But perhaps the most important political fact is this, that the Revolution proves that the "unity of the State" is a political mirage. The towns suddenly declared themselves enemies of each other, and Versailles seized the grain which had been bought by Paris. There was a perpetual struggle for food between the different *départements*, which had suddenly constituted themselves into independent States.<sup>3</sup> Normandy attempted to starve Paris, and Narbonne Toulon.<sup>4</sup> This fierce opposition of the units to each other is a proof of the superficial nature of human combinations, and of the truth of the theory of Hobbes. Men are always in

<sup>1</sup> "Les Origines de la France Contemporaine," Paris, 1893, vol. i. p. 407.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 330.

"the precincts of battle."<sup>1</sup> Society is a combined effort against nature, but as soon as its mechanism goes wrong the units and atoms of the body politic turn against each other. This is the truth of all civil wars. But there is a still deeper truth, namely, that even in its most tranquil states society is a form of refined and disguised war. It is surprising that a writer like Mr. Herbert Spencer, who has all the facts of life in his hands, disbelieves this truth, or, at any rate, supposes (perhaps he only hopes) that it will not always be the truth. According to him, human nature is in process of being so tamed and purified by evolution that egoism must finally disappear in "altruism."<sup>2</sup> But the essential facts of life forbid us to believe it. We no longer carry on a bloody rivalry, it is true, except when nation meets nation,<sup>3</sup> but it is a question whether the bloodless rivalry of civilised minds does not create more suffering than that swift extinction of the unfit which characterised primitive conditions. A powerful intellect may cause as much misery as a powerful sword. Men have sharpened their minds into weapons of aggression and pillage for the

<sup>1</sup> "Leviathan," ch. xviii.

<sup>2</sup> "Data of Ethics," ch. xiv.

<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact every nation in Europe is increasing its armaments, and as I write a war is raging in South Africa.

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exploitation of the world, but those who are meanly endowed must remain throughout their lives miserable drudges for the mere means of subsistence. Philanthropy touches only the fringe of things. Every addition a man makes to his fortune is a form of aggression—legitimate, no doubt: but what is illegitimate? Where does crime begin? Crime is not merely the spasmodic effort of a dazzled and degraded will. If we look deeply into human nature, we must not burden ourselves with conventional distinctions and definitions. For in this refined and muffled war of civilisation there is a subtle extension of the scope of crime. The disasters and catastrophes of individual lives, the hunger and cold of the poor, the torment of unsuccessful runners in this blind race for life, may be traced ultimately, no doubt, to the ruthless facts of nature, but primarily also to the ruthless vigour of successful and superior intellects and wills. It is this unconscious and collective crime of humanity, in its daily work, against the weak, which troubles the philosopher and the philanthropist. But at least the philosopher ought to see that it arises not merely out of the nature of human wills, but out of the natural conditions of existence. It is one of the dogmas of the optimist that society is an organism; but it is an organism never free from disease. As

eg. Islam  
guilt  
punish

Taine points out, a process of social mortification and decomposition is never absent.<sup>1</sup> There is a vast question of social parasitism.<sup>2</sup> There is a vast question of the helplessness of those human beings who are maimed from their birth by hereditary influences. Socialists, in short, do not perceive that the very nature of things is against them. The facts of life refuse to be exorcised. Society, like nature, is unintelligible without its inevitable processes of disease, dissolution, and collapse.

There are only two movements in every society and in all history, and these are the movement towards cohesion and the movement towards dissolution. These two processes are so interconnected that whereas a historian who judges them only in their chronological order supposes that they are separate and assigns different dates to their manifestations, the philosopher perceives that their manifestations are really simultaneous. They are the perpetual essence of all politics. The political condition of Europe to-day is the result of causes which, although buried in the past, are still active. In the victory or defeat of some Greek or Roman general, or, rather, since we ought to go still farther back, in the

<sup>1</sup> "La Conquête Jacobine," Paris, 1894, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Massart.

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victory or defeat of some leader of savage tribes who have left no trace in history, are to be found the causes of the grouping of modern states. Nay, we should doubtless go beyond the frontiers of civilisation and the human race altogether to a point far distant from the first sign-post of history in order to discover within the low forms of primitive life the conditions of all historical movements. In any case the double fact, common to every historical movement, is "the way up" and "the way down." In a passage, remarkable both for its bitterness and its insight, Kant lays bare the essential character of historical sequence. He says that the events of history appear to prove that the only design (*Zweck*), the only goal of the process, is the process itself. That is to say, history like nature is the expression of a mode of periodic and mechanical change (*Maschinenmässigen Gang der Natur*) which has no reference to the welfare of the peoples who form only the ephemeral material of the process.<sup>1</sup> States are like those primitive

<sup>1</sup> "Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft," p. 37. In his essay on the Idea of a Universal History, Kant suggested that though the course of the world is a "wild arrangement" it may contain a "hidden plan," for the construction of an ideal state. But an ideal state would be subject to the same laws of change which govern other things. Kant says that history is "a web of folly and childish vanity," and that "at the

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unicellular and multicellular organisms which divide and recombine in an unvarying cycle of organisation and disorganisation. Perhaps the most vivid illustration of this truth is to be found in the history of the Italian republics. Those states were so thoroughly disorganised after the struggles of five centuries that the very idea of the state, and even of citizenship, perished out of the Italian mind.<sup>1</sup>

Now I do not deny that this criticism of the "moral basis" of the individual and of the collective activities of mankind leads towards a theory which is fundamentally pessimistic. In fact, there is no escape from the pessimistic conclusion by means of the moral ideal. Morality can have no ultimate meaning. It has meaning only as it exists in the midst of a state of imperfection. It has meaning as police has meaning. Aristotle saw that it is loaded with paradox.<sup>2</sup>

sight of the actions of man displayed on the great stage of the world it is impossible to escape a certain degree of disgust." Out of such materials it is difficult to see how an ideal state could be created, and it is too probable that the next thousand years will be as the last thousand years.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. De Sismondi. "Storia d'Italia," Torino, p. 30. "In sullo scorcio del quinto secolo spezzatosi il vincolo sociale che avea fatto dell' impero un corpo solo non fu potuto più rannodare."

<sup>2</sup> For instance, he says that from the point of view of the gods virtue is contemptible, by which he means that it is the expression of a coercive force directed against an individual who is not really free.

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And if Kant, who perceived the same truth, had boldly stated it, his own theory, instead of being only half a pessimism, would have been the most pessimistic of all possible theories. The universe, as a whole, can never admit of any advance. It admits only of transformations. There is gyration, there is movement, but there is nothing so meaningless as the idea of progress in a straight infinite line. The principle of teleology must be applied all round or not at all. It must be called in to explain abnormal as well as normal conditions, and the processes of ruin and decay, as well as those of growth and beauty. Moreover, it must be applied to the ruin and decay of the moral as well as of the physical world. But it will never help us to discover any final meaning. It helps us to understand only the mechanism of the process. ✓

We shall, of course, be told that Arcadia would be intolerable, and that contradiction is the life of the world. This is the argument of Kant. But it is not easy to see why we should be expected to become enthusiastic over a pair of disreputable alternatives. The plain truth is that pessimism is the most unselfish of all ethical theories. It transfers attention from the private sufferings of the individual to the raging misery of the world, and makes an effort to stem the tide of it. Whenever the senti-



mental view of Nature has been transcended we begin to see what a thing Nature is. Pessimism is supposed to involve an absolute condemnation of the world. And there can be no dispute that Schopenhauer stated the theory in such a way as to justify this interpretation. But it is obvious that this can never be its meaning. Mr. F. H. Bradley has said that it means "When all is rotten it is a man's duty to cry stinking fish." But if all were rotten there could be no pessimism at all. Every gain to optimism is a gain to pessimism. Whenever a man's hatreds become universal we have a right to distrust him. And if pessimism means that anything is worth nothing it is the most ridiculous of theories. It is precisely because there is so much worth something, that can be known and felt only in opposition to so much worth nothing, that the pessimistic theory can be formulated. If we knew only pleasure or only pain we would never hear either of optimism or of pessimism. He is merely an irreflective person who finds any contradiction in the fact that only a pessimist can be the gladdest and the saddest of mankind. We are, of course, met here by the difficulty that, since pleasures and pains are relative to an organism, any theory founded on hedonistic distinctions must be ultimately untrue. But, apart from the fact that

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this objection applies equally to optimism—thus justifying at least a temporary pessimism—it may be shown that the real strength of the theory lies quite in another direction. There is a form of it which involves an abstraction from pleasures and pains. If there is one truth true, as Ferrier used to say, for all intelligence, it is the truth of necessity; and it is on this truth that pessimism is founded. We shall be told that the sphere of necessity is the sphere of relativity *par excellence*. "Reality is above necessity." But the reply is, that reality *is* necessity or is meaningless. The value of Spinozism is that it refuses to find intelligible any theory that attempts to subordinate the category of necessity; and the result is that Spinozism is a pessimism in a half disguise. It is a pessimism that has ceased to shriek. After he had read Spinoza, Goethe became more deeply pessimistic. The theory of determinism, indeed, when fully stated, involves a pessimistic view of the world; and "no one who respects himself" is not a determinist. It is because all that is, is the result of all that has gone before, that Leopardi could write his "Dialogues." In short, no one is capable of true insight who does not perceive that the universe dramatises, and does nothing more. From this point of view, the idea of freedom is

an amusing *canard*. Every genuine advance in knowledge—such as the theory of the evolutionary affair—brings the universe under still further suspicion. For it points to the unmistakable conclusion that indifference is the primary characteristic of reality. The theory of evolution is optimistic, only from the point of view of æsthetics. Otherwise it has done nothing but strengthen the pessimistic position. A pessimist, however, need not be a materialist at all; he is often an active idealist. His pessimism may have a purely intellectual origin, starting in mere wonder at there being anything to be. It may begin in simple amazement at the order of events from stars to pigsties. Pessimism is the basis of religion. It perceives that reality cannot help itself. Like many another theory it labours under the disadvantage of an inadequate name. It is generally supposed to involve simple stagnation and passivity, and all that is withered and paralytic in conduct. But the truth is that it creates a host of ethical activities. It sets up its altars to pity; and passes, or ought to pass, rapidly from its preliminary state of despair to a state of irritated enthusiasm and active indignation. Pessimism is altogether in earnest. In being so it is not illogical, and even though it were it could defend itself easily enough. Although it may alleviate

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misery it cannot alter the universal conditions of existence. Its task is to diminish suffering, although not to eliminate it. It looks with a kind of angry pity on the fact that one half of the world has to do some fiddling while the other half is passing through the fires and musketries of pain. Its deepest message is that the face of reality is streaming with tears—and laughter.



**PART III**

**THE LIST OF ILLUSIONS**



## THE LIST OF ILLUSIONS

LET us get back to the individual. For the life of the individual is the reduced survey and map of all Nature that lies beyond him, and his moral feeling is the tragic symbolism which gives it significance. He is the focus of the bright and the dark rays of things, and within his body and within his mind goes on that multiple process of construction and destruction of whose vast symptoms Nature is the vast scene. It may be thought, indeed, that such a view of existence which makes man only the sightseer, and not the controller of the forces around him, and within him, makes him their slave. But can any one who has watched the courses of individual lives and the course of history deny the truth of it? I can pick few bonbons out of this tragedy. Is it possible to exaggerate the strange lot of the soul, this isolated thing in the midst of the unconscious universe which streams and beats upon it, this too sensitive plant in a desert of dark winds?

What does religion at its best mean, except an attempt of the soul to flee from the world? For, surely, if the world were all that blind optimists paint it, there would be no need to discover another, no need of "salvation," and no desire to construct "a new heaven and a new earth." And yet we find that religion is as old as the human soul, and is the expression of its fundamental needs. Man cannot resist being a religious creature, although, indeed, it may be true that he worships he knows not what. It is a profound saying of Schopenhauer that if the world were not something which ought not to be it would not be a problem at all.<sup>1</sup> It would never require an explanation.

I am told that if I say that unless there were *two* poles to the moral life the moral life would be a blank, a meaningless and a non-existent thing, I am saying, in other words, that evil is invincible and unrootable. As if that is not just the full, infamous truth! But, then, good is also unrootable and invincible. It is this endless and abominable drama which we are compelled to act and to watch. If, on the other hand, it is said that this dramatic doctrine

<sup>1</sup> "Wenn die Welt nicht etwas wäre, das, praktisch ausgedrückt, nicht sein sollte: so würde sie auch nicht theoretisch ein Problem sein." Werke, Band iii. p. 664. Leipzig, 1891.

of morals means the destruction of the moral life, such a statement is self-contradictory and ridiculous. As long as evil exists, the moral life must exist. The guarantee that good will never perish out of the world lies in the indefatigable nature of evil. As long as evil exists good is safe! This, O friends and foes, is the divine comedy which lies at the bottom of your tragic lives. If I am now asked whether it is all one Whose we are and Whom we serve, I shall say, Yes, it is all one to the universe, but it is not all one to us!

So far from extinguishing the moral life this doctrine gives it a fearful and violent reality. Only he who knows the air of the pit, dreams and knows the freshness of the upper air. And if I have looked into the lost and affrighted worlds which lie within the human soul, world upon world, and well upon bottomless well, where the unrootable roots of human feeling and desire swarm and multiply, it was to discover the depth and riches of our tribulation. For Thought is a diver and knows only the deep deepening. *Lo gran mar dell' essere!*—But as the Deep deepens the Height heightens, and the thoughts of man keep ascending and descending for ever. The eyes of Truth are tiger's eyes, and full of wild horizons!

Now man is a being who forms two kinds of judgments, an intellectual and an emotional judgment, and those two judgments do not really combine. That is to say, if a man's mere intellect is developed to as great a degree as his emotions, as in my own case, he will find it impossible to form one single and final judgment about the meaning of existence. The intellect is a kind of destroyer, and the perpetual satirist and inner critic of the emotional life. From a purely intellectual point of view the universe, as we have seen, is only a vast network of causes and effects, and man is in the network. Everything that happens, happens within the series of natural causes, and thus is justified. Indeed, a man's philosophical power may be discovered by asking him in what sense he uses the word "unnatural." For there is really nothing unnatural, unless indeed we use the word to express those things which happen more rarely, and are more fugitive and temporary than the rest. How can even the most "artificial" thing appear in the world at all unless as the product of the things around it? The most "unnatural passion," or "unnatural crime," would be discovered to be "natural" if we searched deeply enough for its cause. And just as the state of the atmosphere day is the result of all the atmospheric states



which preceded it, so the state of the world and of every individual living in it at the present moment could not be otherwise than it is, *given the preceding conditions*. Men, however, are unable to rest in such dispassionate and purely intellectual judgments, because the life of emotion is an attempt to re-adapt and re-create Nature ; and it is at this point that moral feeling begins. Thus we would not be doing justice to human life if we remained content with that intellectual analysis of morals which, as we saw, lays bare a contradiction at their foundations. We must penetrate further, and show that in the world of practice the moral ideal has a dreadful and overpowering reality. I shall leave it to others to solve the contradiction. It is my business to state it. There are two lights burning in the soul, and I can only leave them burning.

In any case I am convinced that the deepest root of the moral life rises out of a perception of the necessity of self-preservation against the havoc of instinct. It is the attempt of an acutely self-conscious being directed first of all for the protection of his own body against the ruinous impulses within it. In other words, it is an effort to meet destructive by constructive instincts. If we wish to avoid a one-sided and inaccurate statement of the moral problem, we

must refuse to accept the theory that fear of one's neighbours is the sole cause of morality.<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche announced this theory as if he had made a great discovery, whereas it is already stated in plain words in the "Ethics" of Spinoza, Part IV. Prop. xxxvii. Scholiasit ii. But Spinoza, who was merely a great intellect on legs, treated ethics only intellectually, whereas they are an affair of the emotions.<sup>2</sup> And ethical feeling may be shown to be not a mere appendix to human life but an *instinct*. It has a physiological basis, and is connected with a deep sense of physiological property. It is an affair of involution as well as evolution, and since its external social causes and manifestations have been so often treated, I shall neglect that aspect of it for the sake of its internal significance. Now it is a most remarkable fact that old religions and primitive codes of morals contain laws for the protection of the physical organism against its waste by wild instincts.<sup>3</sup> "Sin" was early discovered to be a man-eating

<sup>1</sup> "Die Furcht ist die Mutter der Moral." Cf. "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> It is quite true that Spinoza had a deep insight into the nature of the emotions. But he treated the life of feeling generally as implying merely a want of mental power (Cf. "Ethics," Pt. IV. Pr. xlvii). He wished to reduce every mental state back to a kind of mathematics of reason.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. The Book of Leviticus and the "Vendidad."

thing. It destroyed society, because first of all it destroyed the individual. And so the moral life originated in an attempt at proportion of the instincts, an attempt at preserving the value of existence as a whole by subordinating particular aspects of it. It began in a struggle to define and distinguish man from the beast, and bury and make subconscious the consciousness of the brute in the consciousness of man.<sup>1</sup> But if the brute has disappeared from sight he is still active below. It is this principle of the struggle between the articulate and the inarticulate in man, this attempt to fix and define the governing power, which is the task of all moralists. For instance, we find the contradiction stated in its intensest form by that admirable psychologist, St. Paul. In his writings we discover a vivid presentation of the fundamental struggle in human life. If the antithesis Reason and Passion, which figures in the works of all moralists since Aristotle, be replaced by St. Paul's more vivid language, "The Spirit and the Flesh," we become at once alive to the predominant fact of a man's life, namely, that he may become his own victim and the source of his own ruin. In St. Paul the idea seems to be almost an obsession, X and he is never weary of expressing it. He

<sup>1</sup> See a remarkable passage in Leviticus, chap. xx.

has an active and perpetual interest in all the morbid aspects of human psychology. "Fornicators," "idolaters," "adulterers," "effeminate," "drunkards," "abusers of themselves with mankind"—these are the people who interested him, and for whom he wrote and toiled.<sup>1</sup> "The Works of the Flesh," "The Cup of Devils," "The Seducing Spirit," "The Mystery of Iniquity," and other phrases, in which he describes in amazing language the whole intoxication of the soul, prove that he had all the gifts of a great spiritual pathologist. But the important point to grasp is that St. Paul explains this struggle in a way not different from the way in which the human tragedy is set forth in this book. He distinguishes man as a spectator from the spectacle of good and evil which goes on within him. Strictly speaking such a point of view is not, as we have seen, scientific, but from the subjective and emotional standpoint it is the whole truth. Thus St. Paul says: "For what I would *that* do I not, but what I hate that I do. . . . Now, then, it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, he describes in a similar way the opposite force which struggles for possession. "Nevertheless I live," he says, "yet not I

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians, chap. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Romans, chap. vii. vv. 15 and 17.

but Christ liveth in me.”<sup>1</sup> Here we have the conception of evil as a kind of *imperium in imperio*. Life is split into two hemispheres, and the external struggle has reached the heart of man and become articulate. Thus the problem is the same whether we state it in terms of science or of theology. The war within the soul is the miniature of the war outside, and the scheme of human life, like the scheme of Nature, is the expression of contradictory purposes. All that we know is the perpetual activity of building, rebuilding, unbuilding. Such a view of the life and strivings of the soul is strengthened also by the psychology of dreams. For even persons of pure habits and ascetic ideals are tormented by nefarious dreams, as if the works of the flesh are permitted their revenge when the watchman goes to sleep! As usual, Schopenhauer, with his profound insight, expresses admirably the scope and meaning of these inward insurrections, when he says that the prayer “Lead us not into temptation” means “Do not let us discover who and what we are!”<sup>2</sup> The attempt of Maeterlinck, therefore, to distinguish qualitatively between an

<sup>1</sup> Galatians, chap. ii. v. 20.

<sup>2</sup> “Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung.” Leipzig, 1891, vol. i. p. 433. Die Bitte: “Führe mich nicht in Versuchung” sagt, “Lass’ es mich nicht sehen, wer ich bin.”

external and an internal fate appears to me to be based on an imperfect psychology.<sup>1</sup> The statement "Il n'existe pas de fatalité intérieure," would never be made by a man who had all the threads of the inner life in his hands. Rather, since the only world we ever really know is the inner world, the only destiny we ever really feel is the inner destiny. Destiny works from within outwards as well as from without inwards. The amount and force of a man's passions, his physical being mixed with his spiritual, his atavism, his illusion, his mirage—that is his "destiny." Luther took a much profounder view of the menaces of life, and stated it with extraordinary audacity—"Sumus autem," he says, "nos omnes corporibus et rebus subjecti Diabolo, et hospites sumus in mundo, cujus ipse princeps et Deus est. Ideo panis, quem edimus, potus, quem bibimus, vestes, quibus utimur, imo aër, et totum quo vivimus in carne, sub ipsius imperio est."<sup>2</sup> What modern theologian would have the insight and the courage to see this truth as Luther saw it? For it means nothing less than that God's Rival is triumphant in this world.

<sup>1</sup> "La Sagesse et la Destinée." Paris, 1899. See his crude analysis of Shakespeare's Ophelia and Goethe's Marguerite, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Schopenhauer.

While, therefore, Kant is adorable in his effort to set up a great Sinai of ethics in the human soul,<sup>1</sup> let us not forget the uncertain and trembling foundations on which he began to build. It is necessary to remember that the "moral life" becomes visible only by means of an incongruous and contradictory medium, and that it must be lived within the precincts of the human body, which is the most complex, the most sensitive, and the most irritable organism in creation. Within the human body there go on a thousand activities of which we are wholly unconscious. Before an act or a motive of which we become conscious can exist at all, a multitude of unseen and unconscious processes contribute their share in it. But if so, it becomes a serious question whether we ought not to push the idea of "responsibility" below the mere surface of human life. Where does "responsibility" begin? Does it apply to those unconscious activities which are the sources of conscious acts, and without which there could be no conscious acts at all? or has it meaning only because the individual has become aware of the acts? But the fact that he is aware of himself, and of some of the

<sup>2</sup> See the magnificent passage in the *Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft*, beginning "Pflicht! du erhabener grosser Name . . ." p. 104.

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activities he contains, is hardly sufficient ground for condemnation, since he may contain a great deal more than he knows or even desires. Is the idea of responsibility the price he has to pay for self-consciousness? But self-consciousness contains much that the "self" had no share in or is not even conscious of, since there is a subconscious self which works and plots unseen. Conscious life may be thus like an overburdened estate for which the new heir is made responsible, although he created none of the burdens which keep accumulating against his will. The ordinary and commonplace view of life consists in the supposition that a man controls himself by his own consciousness. That is not true, or it is only partly true. Consciousness is not the fundamental fact in life. The fundamental fact is subconsciousness, since, as we know, life may continue long after consciousness has ceased. All that consciousness really means is that the individual has become aware of the fact that unconscious elements and activities lie beneath it. To show that I am not exaggerating this truth, I shall quote here a passage from Barker's great work, "The Nervous System," published a few months ago. "One point, self-evident enough when one's attention is directed to it, but which often appears to have been overlooked in connection

with the neurones,<sup>1</sup> is the unremitting character of their activity. With a metabolism so complicated as that occurring with the nerve units, it is inconceivable that there can be any period in which alterations in chemical structure and, consequently, energy transformation are not going on. From moment to moment, throughout all the hours of the day and night, analytic and synthetic processes are taking place, associated with the alterations in physical forces which necessarily accompany these changes. In common with everything that lives, the neurones know no absolute repose. As I have said, in speaking of their metabolism, periods of extravagant activity may alternate with periods of more economic change, but total rest is in consonance with continuance of existence. We are forced to believe that what we ordinarily speak of as the passage of a nerve impulse represents, as it were, a stormy process in the nerve fibre, and that, just as absence of a storm does not mean absence of weather, there are in all probability minor alterations, currents if you will, passing to or fro, or to and fro, in a given nerve-fibre in the intervals between the more violent excitations. With increasing knowledge the importance of centripetal impulses, which fall below the threshold of consciousness, and

<sup>1</sup> "Neurone" is the technical expression for the nerve unit.

of centrifugal impulses insufficient to call forth visible muscular contractions, is becoming more and more evident. In a healthy individual, perhaps, the majority of the impulses passing from the periphery into the nerve centres have no share in the composition of the mental pictures, but these subconscious stimulations are doubtless of decisive significance for the nutrition of the elements concerned and for the processes of subconscious co-ordination."<sup>1</sup> Thus consciousness is like the surface of the sea which is visibly stirred, but there is a deeper sea and a deeper movement underneath. Even an unpractised and unpsychological observer may become aware of this important truth if he makes use of ordinary means of observation. For as life advances, and the activity of youth gives way to the passivity of age, we observe a gradual aggression of the unconscious upon the conscious system. In old age the conscious system—desire, memory, will—dies out; the articulate disappears to make more room for the inarticulate, and if words and ideas do not altogether perish, yet they become in extreme old age jumbled confusedly together. But the unconscious life of the cells persists.

The discussion of the human being, therefore, if it is to be intelligent and profitable,

<sup>1</sup> "The Nervous System." Hirschfeld Bros., London.

must surely be made to begin with the discussion of cell life. Were there even only the minutest and most fragile bridge of connection between the activities of the body and of the soul, it would be sufficient to compel a serious thinker to examine the influences and counter-influences which exist between them. As a matter of fact, we know that the connection is to be discovered at a thousand points. It is at the wavering frontier of unconscious and conscious activities that the moral problem arises. The source of goodness and the source of crime lie *beneath* the articulate in that swarm of furious activities which is the cellular system. We know that the nerve-cells of the human body are in a constant state of agitation and transition, and that they lead a kind of nomadic life. The researches of His of Leipsic, of Forel and of Ramon y Cajal, prove the independence of the individual nervous elements.<sup>1</sup> The proof consists in the fact that the neurone degenerates as a unit.<sup>2</sup> "A human being consists of an aggre-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mott's Croonian Lectures, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> His says "Als feststehendes Princip vertrete ich dabei den Satz ; dass jede Nervenfaser aus einer einzigen Zelle als Ausläufer hervorgeht. Diese ist ihr genetisches, ihr nutritives und ihr functionelles Centrum : alle anderen Verbindungen der Faser sind entweder nur mittelbare oder sie sind secundär entstanden Quoted by Barker, *op. cit.* p. 17.

gate of billions of cells, so intimately connected with, and, related to one another, that the continued activities of the individual cells give the idea of unity, but each cell nevertheless continues to have a life-history of its own."<sup>1</sup> In fact, every nerve-cell possesses its own reproductive and nutritive system, and it fights for its place and nutriment with the cells nearest to it. For instance, the ganglion cells, "which are met with far out in the white matter of the adult spinal cord," are cells which had a greater mobility than the rest, and have in consequence succeeded in gaining that position.<sup>2</sup> The human body, in short, is composed of the most irritable materials in the universe. It is a scene of incessant and almost insane activity, and of a perpetual construction and destruction of itself, caused by the struggle, largely of a chemical nature, of the neurones for nutriment. "There is every reason to believe," says Barker, "that in the various modifications of chemical materials, by means of which the potential energy of the food is transformed into the kinetic energy, which gives rise to what are called the 'vital' manifestations of the neurones, chemical compounds come into existence, in some of the neurones at

<sup>1</sup> Barker, *op. cit.* p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 170.

least, of a degree of complexity scarcely approached elsewhere on this planet, and before the nature of which the most advanced organic chemist stands utterly powerless and despondent." <sup>1</sup> Thus we are able to imagine a case of disordered function resulting in a crime in which it would be scientifically correct to describe the crime as being of chemical origin. The mere fact, that if the brain is poorly nourished it "becomes clouded," would be sufficient reason for discrediting a "moral theory" in which the physiological basis of conduct is neglected or obscured. The anatomy of ethics must be preceded by a more formidable and fundamental anatomy. The truth is that the laws of nervous life are as fixed as any other physical laws, and if we were able to observe them at work within a given individual we could predict his character. Man is the victim of the forces he carries about with him, and consciousness is only a narrative, more or less obscure, of the facts beneath it. A particular thought, a particular feeling, a hope, a fear, a lust, an illusion, are the necessary results of the nutritive changes of our neurones. They arise out of the myriad activity of unconscious forces within us. The so-called unit of life which uninformed observers seem to suppose to be a thing that could be

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 217.

grasped by the hand, is, as Virchow has shown, only a name for the recurring arrangement (*Einrichtung*) of separate activities.<sup>1</sup> And this fact is true of the brain itself, whose cells carry on independent functions. Thus "moral disease" may be shown to arise out of physical conditions which are beyond control. It has been proved that criminals and other persons whose characters have deteriorated have been suffering from disease of the anterior association centres.<sup>2</sup> And how are we to judge the case of an individual whose character is apparently normal, but in whom abnormal processes may have already begun? For crime is an affair of the degrees and intensity of feeling. There is no human vice, however awful, which may not be justified in the region of cause and effect. Moral judgments finally pass into intellectual and pathological judgments if there is an intellect behind them at all. No doubt the "objections" to vice and crime remain, but they are based on æsthetic and utilitarian grounds. In any case, the instinct of legal suppression may be considered safe, since it is the State's instinct of self-defence. The ultimate "right" in the universe is might. But if the moralist wishes to say anything which will really enlighten us on

<sup>1</sup> Barker, *op. cit.* p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1080.

the springs of human character, he must take the point of view of a philosophical physician. I once asked a distinguished alienist whether a particular vice in which I was interested was a cause of insanity, and he replied, "It is not so much a cause as a sign of an insanity already in progress." Such a reply seems to throw a terrible light on the human nervous system. Alcoholic excess, for instance, doubtless causes nervous disorders, but nervous disorders also cause alcoholic excess and arouse a passion which was previously not in being.<sup>1</sup> "Epilepsy, insanity, imbecility, idiocy, mental weakness, and loss of moral control and will power are frequently the heritage of children born of drunken parents and chronic tipplers."<sup>2</sup> When we consider such facts as these, "salvation" seems to depend on the state of our ganglions.

This, then, is the shifting and insecure frame in which the moral life is set; this is the wavering and uneasy unity by means of which it is to be expressed. And yet for hundreds of years the Church has been wondering why we do not behave like supernatural beings. The soul lies in the midst of a sort of demi-necropolis ✓

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mott's Croonian Lectures. *British Medical Journal*, July, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* July 14, p. 90.

and mixture of life and death. Well might St. Paul exclaim, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" For "sin" has a physiological seat. The vice which wrecks the individual is all the time subserving the best temporary interests of particular cells, which are the decentralised life of the whole system, and may drag it to ruin. I have looked closely at the human eye, and even in its dullest form it has always reminded me of the tormented apex of a flame. For the body is full of great relays of passion, and seems never weary of its own combustion, and the soul must sit for ever in a burning building.

If St. Paul were living to-day, and if, having made himself acquainted with the results of psychological and pathological science, he had studied human consciousness at its foundations, he would doubtless be a criminal anthropologist. In his moral excavation of mankind he would have connected "sin" with physical conditions. A brain so keen for all kinds of spiritual confusion would not have neglected the mass of facts of the inner life which modern analysis has laid bare. For it can hardly be said that at the time he wrote the state of human knowledge was in any way favourable to a thorough examination of the internal problem.

Yet, even as it is, St. Paul states, in language more or less exalted and theological, the whole pathology of the human soul. Stripped of its dogma, indeed, the Christian doctrine of temptation is of the most profound psychological significance. For it means that the soul lies between two sets of forces, outer and inner, threatened from without and sapped and mined from within. To every spiritual creation there is a counter creation. The mere fact that we are in possession of an organism so sensitive that it registers automatically, and often unknown to ourselves, every impression made upon it, is enough to warn us against judging it by any hard and fast system of moral architectonics. The human body carries on a kind of free trade to all impressions, and the very qualities of light and air and temperature affect it fundamentally. Moreover, as we now know, it is not merely an organism but a great community of organisms, any one of which may at any moment degenerate and cause the degeneration of the whole. So that the devilry of a character is ultimately to be traced to the devilry of the cells. The two great causes of nervous disease are either (1) deficient or (2) excessive stimulation. But the task of the individual to guide himself along a weary, diagonal, and middle course is the most difficult in the world. Besides, if he does

degenerate, who can say that he is not fulfilling the only destiny appointed to him? A pathologist could have predicted as much. If an individual is a member of a state which happens to be degenerating he is not blamed on that account, because it is seen that the fall of states is a natural process. He is blamed, however, for his own process of degeneration; but in the economy of nature the one may be as necessary as the other. Individual lives are only instances of a perpetual experiment. Degeneration is only the stage of a process towards a new construction in order that nature may continue her eternal task and begin again. Thus Virchow seems not to be aware of the deeper meaning of his own theory, according to which organic variations are pathological.<sup>1</sup> For what is temporarily pathological may be ultimately constructive. Every one knows, for instance, that the horse is descended from an animal which originally possessed four, or as some naturalists think, perhaps five toes. Gradually the "outer toes" disappeared or became rudimentary, and the middle toe was expanded into the foot and hoof which we now see. Yet although no one will deny that the horse, as we know him to-day, is a superior animal to his ancestor of the Miocene period, it is quite possible that an

<sup>1</sup> See Part I.

observer, if he could have watched the change taking place, might have supposed that a process of hopeless degeneration had set in. He would have said that four toes are better than one, and yet in the case of the horse the reverse is the truth. Now it is quite possible that moral variation might likewise be an attempt towards moral construction. As a matter of fact, what is abnormal in one age becomes normal in the next. And although moral degeneration may cause the disappearance of the experimenting individual, it may nevertheless be an instance of one of those ultimate and hidden designs of nature to fulfil which man, like any other animal, is made the means. Such a point of view is certainly not advanced for the sake of supporting those "bovine optimists" who might seize it gladly for the purpose of elaborating their tedious theories according to which pain and evil are only unreal negations. On the contrary, it is meant to emphasize the deeper and more exasperating truth that the individual is made the sport of nature for the sake of ends which lie beyond himself. There is nothing but a process. The vicious person is a useful and necessary spectacle, it may be, to show us how the thing ought *not* to be done. Every individual appears in the world only to typify a force which lies behind him, and to

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guarantee its continuance in those who succeed him. A philosopher may, if he chooses, conceive of life as essentially the expression of a rhythm,<sup>1</sup> but not lyrical, not musical, rather like the double rhythm and roar of sea pebbles as they are swept backwards and forwards by the tides.

Now just as poison is distributed throughout the world and sits waiting for the lips of man, so the inner world of feeling and of thought is full of moral toxins, and it is the soul's task to search for antitoxines to meet them. This is the meaning of "temptation." Here, as in outer nature, there is the same insane contradiction and excruciating strife. Who knows the infernal struggle against all kinds of transmitted vice which men and women must carry on every day of their lives till death delivers them? I have looked through human life, I have looked at its lusts, its idols, and its simulacra, and it seems to me all like fire, phantasmagoric, reaching its climax for ever, and for ever falling from it. This is the plot of the universe. When I have seen men conscious of the fatality of instinct which was driving them to abominable goals, I have felt the depth of the truth of Schopenhauer's view of life, which consists in a perception of the antagonism

<sup>1</sup> Spencer.

of the intellect and the will. For in these cases the intellect becomes merely the pained spectator of the will. No doubt in the eyes of St. Augustine such a belief is the worst form of unbelief, although once it was the only belief he possessed. But he rejoiced at last that he was delivered from "the adulterous stimulus" of "that grand fable of Manichæism." As if his own life and confessions are not the most impressive instance of the truth of it. Apart from his previous life, his movement towards God has no meaning. It has meaning only because of the long interregnum of the passions which preceded it. Like Saint Francis, he was a man whose soul was full of his body before his body became full of his soul. To the end Augustine was "rolling and turning in his chain." Even after the victory he admits there are "two wills," although he refuses to admit there are "two minds," but this is only a verbal subterfuge, and his metaphysic is not convincing.<sup>1</sup> It is strange that, like all Christian writers except Luther, Augustine writes fiercely against the heresy of a dual principle, although the impressiveness of Christianity depends on that fact. "When I was thus deliberating upon serving the Lord my God now, as I had long purposed, it was I who willed, I who

<sup>1</sup> "Confessions," Book viii.

nilled, I, I myself. Therefore was I at strife with myself, and rent asunder by myself. And this rent befel me against my will and indicated not the presence of another mind, but the punishment of my own. Therefore it was no more I that wrought it, but sin that dwelleth in me; the punishment of a sin more freely committed, in that I was a son of Adam."<sup>1</sup> If this is not a "conflict between two contrary souls," what is it? The quotation from St. Paul, as we have already seen, only darkens the problem. Augustine asks why, if there are two souls in a man, there may not be many. Doubtless man is polyconscious, which makes his destiny still more obscure, but for purposes of analysis the facts of life and consciousness are always in two masses at a given moment. The "Confessions" are imperishable just because they are full of the inward rage and antagonism of a sensuous and spiritual nature, which sees life double; and Augustine was the forerunner of the Puritans, who expressed the same truth in Western and less majestic phrases. It is the perception of malignant influences in the world which gives a touch of tragedy even to the literature of Puritanism. Even the arid mind of Baxter becomes now and again impressive. "We have wine and vinegar in the

<sup>1</sup> "Confessions," Book viii.

same cup," he says, and the world is full of "frozen, uncomfortable Christians." In its most intolerable form Puritanism was nevertheless an attempt to save human beings from themselves, and its perpetual war against the "sins of the flesh" was of physiological importance. It made the moral ideal a kind of riot act, and in its fierce effort to save the world turned religion into blackmail. After all, Puritanism expressed the nothingness of life in language no more exaggerated, although more frankly hedonistic, than Schopenhauer's — "Many a poor Christian is sometimes bending his thoughts to wealth, or flesh pleasing, or applause, and so loses his relish of Christ and the joy above till God break in upon his riches, or children, or conscience, or wealth, and break down his mountain which he thought so strong. And then, when he lieth in Manasseh's fetters, or is fastened to his bed with pining sickness, the world is nothing and heaven is something."<sup>1</sup>

To the Puritan sin is like some mysterious rider saddled on the soul. But if the soul loves its rider? If the last dogma it accepts is the dogma of its fatality, when evil has become the positive and good only the negative, and a

<sup>1</sup> "The Saints' Everlasting Rest." London. Religious Tract Society, p. 205.

tottering mystery? In the heart of the accumulated riddle of existence Evil sits veiled and triumphant. And the strangest sight in civilisation is a human being sitting at last among the catastrophes of vice and opening the book of wisdom too late, as we might open a prayer-book *illuminated* in hell!

Now the fundamental instinct of every human being is to increase pleasure and to diminish pain, and his practical life is an expression of this double movement. Indeed, it may be said that all that we know is a state of pleasure or of pain, and that the struggle for life is intelligible only in these terms. And since every activity is carried on for the purpose of adding to our pleasures or subtracting from our pains, it is not necessary to go through the full list of human illusions because the law which governs each of them is the same. Love, ambition, power, wealth, and every worldly desire may all be translated into this rudimentary antithesis. For the life of feeling is lived inside the contradiction which those two conceptions embody. It is a familiar truth that pleasure seems doubly sweet if it follows violent pain. The writers of romance, for instance, first carry their heroes through all sorts of accidents and miseries in order to make the final picture of their happiness more

vivid. But the Nemesis of pleasure consists in the fact that ultimately the pleased senses become fatigued, then *ennui*, which is a kind of neutral and negative state, sets in and drives the individual gradually back to the sense of want and deficiency, out of which rises again the desire for renewed pleasure. This is the emotional expression of that fundamental antinomy which we discovered to be the basis of abstract thought—namely, that we can feel and know only by contrast. Condillac, therefore, was only wasting time when he attempted to imagine a being in whom the feelings of pleasure and pain were so divorced that although he possessed the one he had no sense of the other.<sup>1</sup> A psychological condition of that sort is unintelligible, because the moment a newly-born child suffers pain it desires relief. The roots of pain and of pleasure are too closely intergrown for us to be able to separate them.

But if we ask who those are who succeed in the frantic attempt to be happy, which we observe all around us, we should not be surprised to find that the differences in possessions, the

<sup>1</sup> "Traité des Sensations." Ed. Paris 1886, p. 68. "Mais notre statue n'a encore aucune idée des différents changements qu'elle pourra essayer. Elle est donc bien sans souhaiter d'être mieux ou mal sans souhaiter d'être bien,"

differences in the quality of the materials which go to produce pleasure, are after all of small account. It is a familiar truth that great possessions do not necessarily imply great happiness, and that a poor man may have a pleasanter life than a rich one. Both in the quality and the volume of them his sensations may be the caricature of the rich man's, but he himself is not really conscious of the psychological difference; and, besides, the stimulus which comes to him may be so suited to his present capacity for enjoyment that any other would be unintelligible and antipathetic. For instance, a millionaire, recently dead, was known to derive greater pleasure from the bill of fare to which he had been accustomed when he was a boy in rags than from the luxurious viands which his millions made possible for him in abundance; and he was actually found carrying on in his suite of rooms in a great modern hotel the sort of disorderly *ménage* of his early years in Whitechapel. In short, the senses learn with difficulty to produce new sensations. They go on repeating uninterruptedly the series with which they have been acquainted from the beginning. Nothing, indeed, is commoner than the embarrassment which those who have suddenly come to riches display in attempting to learn the pleasures of their new position. The



arts may have no message for them, and they discover only *ennui* in the refined enjoyments of mankind. So that a fact of this sort seems to prove that the actual amount of pleasure which a poor man derives from inferior objects may be equivalent to the amount which a rich man derives from sources and materials of much greater value. The cultured sense suffers agony from a hoarse rasping song which delights a boisterous audience, and the boisterous audience may be bored to death by the technical excellences of a trained voice. The æsthetic values are totally different, but if the relative capacities for pleasure have been satisfied in each case there is a hedonistic equivalence between them. Thus, although the rich and the poor satisfy their desires in different ways, the same psychological law regulating the passage from want to repletion has been operating in both. There will be suffering only in the case where a refined sense has to put up with coarse materials for want of better. But if there is a correspondence between the source of enjoyment and the capacity for it no jar will be felt. The dramatic spectacle which has delighted the West End may be sent to the East End, mutilated, denuded, badly mounted and badly played, but the difference will never be noticed. Nay, the applause will likely be louder and more generous. And

if it requires little argument to show that even in their artificial enjoyments the poor are as well off as the rich, it requires less to show that the great rudimentary passions like love reduce them both, or raise them both, to a common level of feeling. Rich and poor become instantly intelligible to each other in love. Those fundamental desires beckon them the same way.

But every seeker after pleasure has sooner or later discovered in it some flaw. Pleasure is like a fire which is always going out and requires new fuel every moment. Whether our delights are numerous or few they are all fugitive, and the series of pleasurable sensations is a series, each member of which dies out in succession. The element of persistence is not there, and the series has always to be begun over again from the beginning. If no enemy destroys it from without it is its own foe. The universal complaint, both from rich and poor, is that pleasure is the most brittle thing in the world. But the supreme law, which governs all psychological phenomena, is that we know and feel only in so far as knowledge and feeling are the result of some sort of opposition and contradiction. That is to say, unless we had been conscious of pain we never could be conscious of its opposite, which is pleasure. We are

passing perpetually from the one state to the other, and without this vacillation neither of them would be intelligible. The great emotional centres could never be in any state except one of unstable equilibrium, and the movement of feeling must always be one from subsidence up to climax, and from climax to subsidence. Ebb and flow is the law of their existence as well as of all other human things. And these tides are really no more capricious than the tides of the sea. But this is a law to which he who enjoys the series of pleasurable sensations submits with reluctance. He is ignorant that it is the very condition of the enjoyment itself, and that without these alternations the word pleasure would not appear in our language. He never inquires why it is that pleasure seems to pour through our bodies as if they were sieves, which can retain nothing of it. And yet it is just because *he* is able to retain the consciousness of difference between fulness and want, happiness and misery, beauty and ugliness, that pleasure in all its forms is possible for him at all. We can only be intermittently happy as we can only be intermittently wise. Wisdom and folly, virtue and vice, pleasure and pain, these are our mysterious dual heritage, and we could never understand the one apart from the other. This

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double gift, which seems fatal to us, like a two-edged sword, is nevertheless the centre of our lives. The sense of conflict, of transition, of ebbing and flowing, resting and hastening, reappears in human life at every point, and nowhere so unmistakably as in the life of the senses. The rapid waste which accompanies all forms of sensuous pleasure brings on very soon the feeling of exhaustion and collapse. And it is a familiar experience for human beings to find that the moment of lively and vigorous satisfaction, after a success of any sort, lasts an intolerably short time. Indeed, the most successful people suffer *ennui* easiest. The college youth, who is surprised to discover a certain feeling of illusion and emptiness after he has successfully passed his examination, as if the result is less important than it seemed far off, betrays the beginnings of the same insatiable spirit which made Alexander complain, infinitely bored, that he had no other worlds to conquer. We are doomed to the task of looking for new successes and arranging for new pleasures. This is the predominant feature of life. Each pleasure, each success, is only a link in an endless chain. And thus, if occurring in the same way, pleasures tend to become monotonous like a repeating pattern. Unless variation enters into them they cease to stimulate,

and fall into the routine of automatic impulses. Luxury becomes a habit, whose appeal ceases to enliven. And yet it is just here that the rich are better off than the poor, for they are able to vary their emotions by discovering new and bizarre forms of pleasure, whereas the poor are more or less compelled to give themselves up to a few which, like drinking, tend to become obsessive and ruinous. The more intermittent a pleasure is the more vivid it will be; but unless it has ideal elements it will have no persistence. The enjoyments connected with our sensuous life perish with the fatigue of sense, and must be for ever renewed; but if an ideal impulse, and some intellectual elements are mixed with a pleasure, it has a chance of survival. The hazard of marriage, for instance, is that the sympathy which has gone to create it may not extend beyond the sphere of the senses. In such a case the road to ultimate happiness will be foreclosed, because human beings are unable to remain long at that pitch of intensity which the instincts and the senses promise to be enduring, but which is really illusory. Hence it is that love and beauty have filled the world with all sorts of tragedy. They contain the very stuff of illusion. It is when *they* fail him that man becomes troubled

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by those spirits of the terror of life which whisper to him that all is vain.

Was ich besitze seh' ich wie im weiten  
Und was verschwand, wird mir zu Wirklichkeiten.

Love and beauty have filled man with more illusions, more disastrous passions, than any other of the potencies of his being. For although love is a universal pleasure, it is also the spirit of unrest. This is the restless spirit which goes to and fro in the earth, walking up and down in it. It is the focus of all contradictions, mingling pleasure and pain in so strange a way. The annals of love are the indispensable storehouse of the psychology of mankind from which all optimisms and pessimisms take their rise.

From one point of view each individual is the best judge of his own happiness. Even the weakest individual knows best what particular stimulus will afford him the greatest enjoyment at a particular moment, and the instincts are always correct in their attempt to create *present* enjoyment. It is only when the question of balance and proportion among pleasures is considered that the instincts are seen to provide not for well-being as a whole, but only for particular and momentary forms of it, which may become ruinous in the end. Thus in love more than in any other of the great fires, which kindle and enrage our being, there is a momentary

usurpation of the whole individual towards only particular ends, which may not be conducive to his own preservation. It is seldom, indeed, that a single individual has *all* the great passions. If he had, he would be a terror. He would be a polymaniac, a sort of Gargantua and Pantagruel. It is more common to see some single passion struggling for the hegemony, and gaining it. But all the great passions make us lopsided, and it is as difficult to distribute our allegiance to them in the right proportion as it is for a Catholic to distribute his devotion among his saints. One thing is clear, that if the individual chooses only one single way in which to make himself happy, there will be, just in so far as he is complex, a sort of conspiracy and hubbub among all the other unsatisfied cravings of his nature clamouring for recognition as well. This is the explanation of the fact that men who have grown to distinction by their ambitions are heard regretting other forms of human activity in which they have had no share, and even confessing that they would be ready to exchange their lot for some other. Plato makes Ulysses—wary of ambitions, weary of success—select, when the new choice is given him, the lot of an obscure man as the most desirable of all. Man can never satisfy himself all round. The world touches him at every point, but he can respond



only at a few points, and must sacrifice his complex life to narrow issues. The major passions crush out the minor, but the minor may be as important. What we are concerned with more nearly is, however, that just because the modern man is so complex his happiness must be complex as well. But that is a condition he cannot realise. The happiness which consists of ideal elements is rarely even sought. Most men believe with Valla<sup>1</sup> that the senses will redeem them, and by the senses I do not mean merely the gross senses; but they are preparing vast illusion for themselves. "There is only one feeling more intolerable than want and that is satiety." Even the rich man's attempt to vary pleasures fails in the end because the individual finds *himself* in every new series. He has learned all epicurean tricks, and although the materials differ he manipulates them in the same way. Indeed, all these pleasures are like riggings by which men climb only to giddiness.

Who, then, have found happiness if these are the laws of it? The conditions for rich and poor are alike. In this vast and curious scheme of life, where pleasure and pain are always shifting places, who finds persistence? Man is forced to play see-saw all his days. Why then

<sup>1</sup> 1407-1457.

should he expect to be on the upside for ever? These gifts of sense seem to be given him only to work out a conflict. He is set in the midst of eddies and tides. His eyes are fixed not on what he has but on what he has not. Every pleasure is haunted by the fear of its loss, and every pain is aggravated by the image of a pleasure out of reach. It is because both are real that the life of emotion is the seat of tragedy.

But if this is true, Schopenhauer's theory of pleasure and pain cannot be considered wholly correct. Schopenhauer must always command admiration for his great insight; but his psychology of Suffering is not entirely satisfactory. According to him pleasure can never be positive, but only negative. All it means, he says, is the absence of pain. This, indeed, is his central thought and the basis of his system.<sup>1</sup> His view of life is built upon it. Pleasure, he says, is the satisfaction, or rather the quenching, merely, of desire, but since desire means want (*Mangel*), that is, pain, pleasure can mean only the end of pain (*das Ende eines Uebels*). It means nothing more than that a given pain has been removed. Hence its essence is

<sup>1</sup> "Alle Befriedigung oder was man gemeinhin Glück nennt ist eigentlich und wesentlich immer nur negativ und durchaus nie positiv." "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung," vol. i. p. 376.

negative. Since desire, that is pain, is the essence of existence (*dem Leben wesentlich*) enjoyment can be known only indirectly. It is interesting to notice that Jeremy Taylor, whose pessimism is certainly as deeply expressed as Schopenhauer's held the same opinion. "For so indeed," he says, "we are to reckon the pleasures of this life—the limit of our joy is the absence of some degree of sorrow, and he that hath the least of this is the most prosperous person."<sup>1</sup> But this is an exaggerated description of the real facts. Pleasure involves a more complex psychological condition than the mere absence of pain could ever create. If Jeremy Taylor and Schopenhauer mean that pleasure is merely a neutral condition, they have overstated their case; because, although the intensity of a pleasure may be measured by its distance in degree from a pain, it has its own qualities which become the sources of feeling. It is not merely that a nerve may be irritated and that the irritation may cease. But it may be irritated (in the technical sense of that word) pleasurable. Thus pleasure is not merely the absence of pain, but the presence of something which is not pain. Besides, how can Schopenhauer explain the "inborn error" (*angeborenen Irrthum*), as he calls it, which consists in our

<sup>1</sup> "Holy Dying," iv. Rivington's Ed. p. 29.

belief that we are born to be happy?<sup>1</sup> For an instinct has meaning only as involving a struggle towards objects which are real and may be seized. It may be true, as Schopenhauer says, that the reason why dramatists and the writers of romance hastily let the curtain drop, after their heroes have arrived safely out of danger, is that they know that the "happiness" which they have gained is a vanishing thing. If the curtain remained up, the miseries would begin again. Doubtless, a continuous state of pleasure can never be an object of art except among inferior artists; but pain, too, is not continuous. Pain has meaning only because it stands opposed to pleasure, which may at any moment break in upon it. But, in any case, no one who has felt the tide of pleasure sweeping across his body doubts for a moment that it has positive qualities. It is neither the ebb nor the interval between the ebb and flow, but the flow itself. The truth is, that the words positive and negative in this connection are misleading. Or if they are to be used at all, the word negative should be given that constructive function which has been assigned to it throughout this book.

In refusing to allow a positive value to pleasure, Schopenhauer not only missed the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 729.

real sting of the situation but deprived his own theory of an important proof of its truth. It is just because we feel both pleasure and pain so acutely that the misery of the see-saw comes home to us. If pleasure were a mere emptiness of pain we should not feel the loss of it. We should not feel the hideous contrast as we passed back to pain. It is because we are pitched from the reality of the one to the reality of the other, and can know nothing else in this life, that a theory like Schopenhauer's is justified at all. The really infernal thing in human life is its perpetual process of addition and subtraction. The grand illusion of mankind consists in a belief in the permanence of pleasure. Only a mind familiar with the roots and basis of human knowledge and desire can deliver itself from such an hallucination. For it sees that since the world is for ever changing shape there can be no permanence in pleasure. But when we say that this is the worst of all possible worlds we do not mean that everything in it is evil. We could not judge a thing to be evil at all unless we knew there was something good. Schopenhauer, in that he exaggerated the one side, does not appear to me to have stated pessimism altogether correctly. It is only because the nature of reality is dramatic and can never be anything

else, that it is hopeless to expect peace in the world.

Now the objection to Schopenhauer's theory of pleasure and pain may be applied also to his theory of art. It is of the utmost importance for the philosopher to possess a true insight into the meaning of art which embodies the emotional life of man and gives it its deepest expression. Whereas, however, according to Schopenhauer it is the function of art to deliver us from the tyranny of will and desire and to give us objects of pure contemplation in which our interest is disinterested, in my opinion the reverse is the truth. If art is an affair of the emotions how can it bring tranquillity? It seems amazing that Schopenhauer supposed that only in the contemplation of beauty is man delivered from the strivings of desire and will. On the contrary, I shall show that beauty is the very sphere of desire, and overwhelms the will. Schopenhauer says that the artist as such is freed from the unrest which fills common men.<sup>1</sup> But this is in notorious contradiction

<sup>1</sup> "Wir haben in der ästhetischen Betrachtungsweise zwei unzertrennliche Bestandtheile gefunden: die Erkenntniss des Objekts, nicht als einzelnen Dinges, sondern als Platonischer Idee, d. h., als beharrender Form dieser ganzen Gattung von Dingen: so dann das Selbstbewusstsein des Erkennenden nicht als Individuums sondern als reinen, willenlosen Subjekts der Erkenntniss." *Op. cit.* vol. i. p. 230.

with the facts to be found in the biographies of men of genius who have invariably suffered from superheated natures. The attempt of Schopenhauer to separate the artist from his work and to displace personal by impersonal elements results in formalism and confounds the task of art with the task of science. Doubtless the artist is free from the common struggle of the will which manifests itself in daily life, but he is the victim of a more furious and devastating will. To say that art subdues the will (*ein Quietw alles Wollens*) is a ludicrous comment on the lives of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Benvenuto Cellini, and other vehement men of the Renaissance. For these men lived in a kind of spiritual tempest and inward rage. So far from contemplating the objects of "pure knowledge" they were the slaves of pure emotion. Every one has heard of Michelangelo's *terribilità*, and his work and his life were the expression of a gigantic and restless nature.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, it was his passionate desire for beauty which filled da Vinci's life with restlessness.<sup>2</sup> If the artistic character is, as it ought to be, the most impressionable in the

*caution  
was given*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti." By J. A. Symonds, London, 1893, vol. ii. p. 360.

<sup>2</sup> See the admirable monograph by Gabriel Seailles, "Léonard da Vinci." Paris, 1892.

world, it is difficult to see how art can be anything else but an internal fire. Indeed, the mere physical temperature of artists is generally higher than that of other men. It is science and not art which by its unemotional survey of the world attains the region of tranquil knowledge.<sup>1</sup> In his account of each of the arts from architecture to music the defects of Schopenhauer's analysis become visible. He does not remain consistent with himself. He admits that music so far from being an expression of unemotional states is the most perfect reproduction of the harmony and latent discord of the world (*das Abbild des Willens selbst*). He shows, too, that the fundamental characteristic of architecture is dynamical; that is to say, it is the embodiment of a struggle of the forces of gravity towards cohesion and balance,<sup>2</sup> and that only a superficial view of it considers it merely as a presentation of symmetry. But it is a strange error to say, as Schopenhauer says, that lyric and dramatic poetry are the

<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer seems in the end to abandon his own theory, for he says the artist never possesses the peace of the saint. Cf. *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> "Dieses alles beweist eben dass die Baukunst nicht bloss mathematisch wirkt, sondern dynamisch, und dass was durch sie zu uns redet, nicht etwan bloss Form und Symmetrie sondern Vielmehr jene Grundkräfte der Natur sind." *Op. cit* i. p. 254.

expression of "pure knowledge for the purpose of delivering us from the pressure of the will" (*um uns vom Wollen und seinem Drange zu erlösen*). Rather the reverse, since the lyric has been used to express the soul's bitterest cries, and the drama is founded on the conflict of wills. Schopenhauer is both untrue to his own system<sup>1</sup> and to the facts. The truth is that it is the function of art to reproduce the struggle of the world under the form of a contradiction between ugliness and beauty. This stubborn and sullen principle expresses itself everywhere, but nowhere with such vividness and violence as in art. And just as no new virtue could be devised without a corresponding vice, so no new grace or beauty could be created without a possible deformity. This is the paradox of the æsthetic consciousness. Art in its essence is dramatic. It is not merely a struggle between beauty and ugliness, but between the sense of permanence and the sense of change. It is an effort of the soul to reproduce the phantasmagoria of the world. There can be no question that its historical movement has consisted in an unwearied search for emotional significance. Thus the real advance of art is always an advance inwards.

<sup>1</sup> "Nirgends ein Ziel, Nirgends ein Ruhepunkt." *Op. cit.* i. p. 364.

Plotinues first discovered this truth when he said that the "Arts create much out of themselves," and Taine's "*Philosophie de l'Art*" is merely a brilliant scientific exposition of it.

But although Taine rendered a great service in stating so clearly this law of significance in æsthetic creation, he makes it too often a merely intellectual and formal principle. To say that a great artist always discovers the essential character of an object is true, but so does a man of science. Taine does not distinguish with sufficient clearness the kind of significance at which art aims, and he does not show us in what way an æsthetic process differs from an exposition in anatomy or a geological survey. In other words, he does not lay bare the psychological elements of æsthetics. Although he speaks of the artist's "original" sensation, he does not tell us with sufficient clearness that the æsthetic judgment is an emotional judgment, and that the significance it expresses is an emotional significance. Perhaps he thought it had already been done by Kant, but it really remains to be done. In any case, although Taine's exposition of the historical development of art is of high value, since he lets us see unmistakably the interaction between the spirit of a period and its æsthetic creations, in such a way as to show clearly why, for

instance, the French drama under Louis XIV. took the form that it has,<sup>1</sup> he does not really solve the problem for us, either on its metaphysical or psychological side. His analysis of Italian and Dutch art accounts for their characteristic differences; but he finds no principle immanent in each, except, indeed, the fact that they were both conditioned by their environment. But the question is much deeper. The question is, granting that it is the function of art to express, not merely the significance but the emotional significance of the world, what *is* its significance? Looking at reality as a whole, what is its most striking feature, not for the intellect only but for the feelings? If we discover this, we shall discover what form art ought to take, or rather what form it has unconsciously taken. Taine's book is a Natural History of Art, in which he accounts for the differences which characterise the same art as practised in all the nations of Europe. That is a very important task, but it is not the task of æsthetics. The task of æsthetics is to discover a constructive principle governing artistic work throughout all its variations. It is not the task of æsthetics to give laws to the artist, but to unfold the law which, as a matter of fact, he has unconsciously followed. We begin by

<sup>1</sup> "Philosophie de l'Art." Paris 1890. vol. i.

asking, therefore, what is that significance of the world which art should seize and bring home to our emotions? Now, as we have already seen, the essential character of the world of outward reality is movement, transition, change. That is also the essential character of the inward world of our feelings and desires. But if this is so, and if it is the task of art to reproduce it, then art must in its essence be dramatic, since the basis of drama is movement and change.

In what sense is architecture dramatic? When the Phœnician cave-dwellers moved out of their subterranean dwellings, I wonder if the drama of their struggle against nature should be considered less real because it was unconscious. Really, it could not have been unconscious. For consider that all architecture takes its rise in the attempt to construct artificial caves in place of caves underground. And man, as he measured his first building on a free space, measuring, as doubtless he also did, the force of wind and storm that might be inimical to it, surely felt a new emotion, new and dramatic, when he found himself in conflict with the gods of the air. He grew less timid, and laid his own foundations, discarding the rock walls which, for instance, invariably formed the nucleus of

buildings in Tyre and Sidon. And as the building grew higher and higher, fighting with the elements, man doubtless thought that at last he had found permanence amid shifting sand and withering landscape. Thus we have come to think that architecture is essentially immobile, remaining fixed, while generations of men pass away. Even though we forget, however, the original piquancy of the feeling that gave it birth, the dramatic contrast between the duration of stone and the evanescence of man long ago entered into the popular imagination. So that building, by its apparent permanence, emphasises the fugitive nature of its surroundings, and calls up a feeling of dramatic contrast. Yet, as a matter of fact, neither architecture nor sculpture is immobile. Any profound view of architecture takes notice of the organic feeling which permeates a great building, so that, as Vasari says, it appears to be not made with hands. Inner and outer construction, the push and pressure of pillars and arches, give not merely the illusion but the very reality of force and motion. This is not an idle speculation. It is the task of an æsthetic to discover these presuppositions of art. Schasler, in his interesting theory of the progress of art from the immobile to the mobile, does not appear to have

seized this principle.<sup>1</sup> But much of what he says is consistent with such a view ; for he points out that very early in architecture the feeling of movement is introduced. For instance, winged creatures and other animals are brought into organic connection with the building, and horses are sent galloping round the Parthenon frieze. But it is probable that decoration had a dramatic origin. If I may venture to propose an origin for decoration, I would say that it began in the attempt to propitiate friendly and intimidate unfriendly gods. We know, for instance, that in early Phœnician architecture there is always a shrine for the protecting god ; and is it idle to suppose that those winged creatures, dragons and serpents, leaning out of a building and coiling round it, were originally considered symbols of its sentinels against the attacks of unfriendly powers ? If this is true, architecture must have aroused in its primitive state a dramatic feeling of very great intensity as man watched the fate of his buildings. An earthquake would form the climax of his fear, and he would consider it as a judgment on his audacity.

But as we approach sculpture, the working of this dramatic law becomes much simpler and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Victor Basch. "Essai Critique sur l'Esthétique de Kant." Paris, 1896.

more easily detected. Walter Pater has well shown the double feeling which penetrates Greek sculpture, for the human body was not considered merely in its own limits, but in its relation to "mystical meanings," to "the sense of sun or cloud, wind or light." "Hence," as he says, "all through the history of Greek art there is a struggle between the palpable and limited human form and the floating essence it is to contain." But apart from this deeper dramatic sense which lay behind the origin of Greek sculpture, we discover in single figures actual dramatic achievement. For instance, the Niobe clutching her last child, and looking round in horror on the prostrate thirteen, is one of the great tragic groups of antiquity. In fact, the mere grouping of figures in sculpture points at once to dramatic conceptions. And, indeed, it may be admitted that the sense of drama in sculpture was much keener then than now. Yet if any one thinks that sculpture is not in its essence dramatic, let him look at the Wrestlers in Florence or the Laocoon. Surely it is sufficient to mention Michelangelo, with his "War of the Centaurs" and the "Lapithæ," or Cellini with his "Perseus," to let us see how eager these men were to turn stone into movement. But let us take the most difficult of all—a single figure. Take, for instance, the figure

of Lorenzo in the "New Sacristy," and if it does not immediately call up the troubled fifteenth century, and the age of the despots, it will be either because the spectator is ignorant of the true meaning of that pose, or of the historical conditions which supplement its significance. Or take the "David." Every muscle is strung up for action, and the hand is itching for the throw. The reverse movement of the body is just beginning, so that the beholder is compelled to call up the figure of the antagonist who is to be overthrown. And if that is not dramatic, I do not know what it is. Even single sculptural figures, without any apparent reference beyond themselves, give the feeling that they should step into a procession.

Pass from sculpture to painting. And since the work of Michelangelo, Tintoretto, and Mantegna is, from the very nature of the subject, obtrusively dramatic, it is necessary to choose two forms of painting which present the greatest difficulty to the theory in hand. Let us choose, therefore, single portraiture and landscape. Now, in the highest form of landscape painting, in the work of Turner and of Millet the reference of nature's relation to man is never omitted. But take a landscape where there is nothing but landscape, and we shall find that it is far fuller of meaning than we had

supposed. It is not merely that a good landscape will give the illusion of movement which is taking place in the real landscape, since none is ever still, but it will rouse sympathy or awe towards it. If it is absolutely desolate, without the trace of human foot, still it will form a scene of possible calamity like the desert place with which "Macbeth" opens, and that forms the appropriate scenery for the coming tragedy. Hence Michelangelo's distaste for landscape painting, which was merely landscape painting, becomes intelligible. Because for him, as for a great actor, the scenery of his stage has no meaning apart from himself. Does it harm this theory that a landscape painter at the moment of creation is not conscious of this sensation? Not in the least. If he is, his work will be more important, but in any case, just because such a feeling may be discovered in his work, it is part of the æsthetic effect and presupposition. It is thus that Turner catches the feet of the storm hurrying across the sea. But even a sea piece by Mesdag, when there are no sails struggling like birds with the storm-wind, invariably suggests the toilers of the sea who have passed over it, and their possible calamity; so that, even where this calamitous aspect of nature is hidden, we become the prey of vague feelings of longing and

awe, and all because man can never separate himself from the universe. As regards single portraiture, it is obvious that he is a great painter who reproduces for us the past outward and present inner history of his model. It has been remarked, for instance, that da Vinci's "Gioconda" has the appearance of having lived through centuries of perpetual reincarnation. So that, unless the single figure calls up the multitude of possible relations to other figures, and bears the impress of the shocks and hazards of life, there has been no success in portrayal. A glance at the portraits done by Holbein, and Tintoretto, and Titian discovers the suggestion of a whole mesh-work of relations, for the single figure is momentarily isolated only to emphasize its nearness to all human conditions, and possible conflict with them.

Obviously, this principle may be traced in fuller detail, but I can at present choose only a few rapid instances in illustration of the fact that art is always trying to reproduce the movement of the world.

As we move forward to literature, the discovery of the law of dramatic significance becomes still easier. It is superfluous to mention literature which is purposely dramatic, like the novel or the drama itself. But, to take a

single instance, let us ask in what sense lyric poetry obeys this law. Now lyric poetry, the poetry of Rückert or of Heine, for instance, has always a double content. It deals not with a single person, but with his emotions as roused by another. At the very least you have fragments of related and opposed feeling, and a lyric is like a cry in a possible drama which might be constructed. As a matter of fact, we find that a distinct form of drama—called the lyrical drama—has been evolved out of isolated songs. Indeed, it may be said quite seriously that a love-song, which is always lyrical, or ought to be, contains the only drama in which the world appears to have any permanent interest. Thus, if we take the work of Rückert, we shall find perhaps no better instance of the essentially dramatic basis of lyric poetry. His "Liebesfrühling" contains about 350 lyrics on a single theme. But before he has approached the magnificent climax of "Wiedergewonnen"—"Meine Liebste hat ein einziges Geschmeide"—he has already brought the reader through all the oscillation which a drama needs. Lyric poetry is at its best not when it contains external description of an outward scene, but when it has a voice of pleading or allurements. Indeed, all art has at its basis some sort of egoism unappeased, and it cannot be otherwise. For

instance, Shelley, in his "Skylark," soon forgets the skylark to say that "*We* look before and after, and pine for what is not." Indeed, at its highest, as, for instance, in the case of Leopardi, the lyric like the sonnet must be given up to human psychology. Poetry is the pathos of transience. But it is only a vulgar error which supposes that there is no drama unless men come out to each other before the audience with swords and staves. A single lyric of Leopardi, his "Pensiero Dominante," for instance, is more many-sided and full of the true drama of feeling than most five-act plays. ✓

Nor as we approach music are we to suppose that, as it becomes more internal, the life of emotion becomes less dramatic. It is just because human psychology is inexhaustible, and true romance invisible, that the "Midsummer Night's Dream" could be translated into music, to discover in sound what the words of Shakespeare had left of it unexpressed. But no really educated mind will suppose that there is a loss of drama. The involution of feeling which accompanies all music is itself sufficient to protect the dramatic effect. Music, indeed, seems to contain the deepest plot in the world. ✓ In ordinary opera the absence of any organic relation between the definite conceptions roused by the words, and the indefinite emotion roused



by the music, corresponding to them is very seriously felt. Music stands in no need of a drama attached to it. It is its own drama, and words seem external to its meaning. It has a deeper sense of oscillation than a verbal drama ever possesses. Wagner, for instance, made discord a constructive part of his musical system. The melody is always hovering on the verges of discord, and the shock is great because of the listener's fear that he will be involved in mere ruins of sound. It was because Wagner had in so full measure the dramatic idea that if you threaten your music with discord you will get the most magnificent effects, that only those who could bear the dramatic strain understood him.

Now this theory, which consists in the belief that all art is but fragmentary drama, does not labour under the difficulties of such a theory as Schasler's; yet it supplements Schasler's theory and explains it. Schasler supposes that the historical progress of art consists in an advance from the immobile to the mobile, from architecture to music. But the objection to such a formula is that music may be contemporaneous with architecture, even in primitive conditions. On the other hand, this theory supposes that the movement is from a less to a more dramatic condition, so that exact chronological sequence

is of no importance. Again, whereas Lessing held that art must never select as its object states that are essentially evanescent, I hold that, since evanescence is the essential character of reality, it is the function of art to impress us with the pathos of it. And, lastly, whereas Leibnitz and Kant, followed by many writers to-day, maintain that the highest level of æsthetic creation consists in a perception of universal harmony, I consider universal harmony to be unintelligible. Consciousness of harmony is possible only because there is consciousness of dissonance.

It is this phantasmagoria of the world, then, of which art is full ; but the attempt to fix it, to fight against weather, and ugliness, and illusion, and time, makes the evanescence more visible. The work of painters is ultimately to be considered as a dramatisation of light. Every profound artist has followed this conflict between light and darkness which began with the first sunrise in Eden. In whatever terms we name the antithesis it appears in all the highest work. Ugliness,<sup>1</sup> for instance, often allured and fascinated some great minds who made their works hover on the verge of it and brought it into inimical contact with beauty. Thus da Vinci painted the Medusa's head with its entwining

<sup>1</sup> I do not mean, of course, that darkness is ugliness.

serpents, and spent long hours over the battle of Anghiari, which he described as a *piazza bestialissima*.<sup>1</sup> Gethsemane and the Cross, and the Descent from the Cross, appear in all the great work of the Renaissance. The misery of the world, indeed, has been enshrined in art, whose deepest note is tragic. How could it be anything else since art rises out of the conflict of the emotions? A great dramatist must move, like Shakespeare, from comedy to tragedy, if he is to be considered as having realised the full meaning of the world, for comedy and tragedy are the dramatic statement of its contradictory purposes. The southern daylight was too strong for Dante, who sought the air and darkness of another world. All great art visits the last destinies of men. Art is ardent and may become terrible because life is ardent and terrible. Perhaps one of the best instances of this sense of contrast in human things reappearing in art is to be found in the work of Boccaccio. There is no more wonderful piece of "realism" in literature than the description of the plague in Florence which precedes the *Decamerone*. While the *Carissime, graziosissime Donne* are listening to love's tales in the midst of sweet flowers in a garden on which the white East (*l'oriente tutto bianco*) shines, Boccaccio never allows us

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Seailles, "La laideur même intéresse sa curiosité."

to forget that two short miles distant Florence is dark and raging with the plague, and that the very pigs are dying on the roads.<sup>1</sup> It is only the miserable wretches who write romance to-day who are too ignorant to see that the best art is not afraid to bring into itself all the darkness of the human soul. These contemptible creatures, writing for sordid purposes and polluting English literature with their tinsel, thoroughly admired by females and infants, have turned the human soul into a toy. The world, however, is not a raree show, but a place of darkness and cloud. Art has something more to do than describe manners and the cycles of vanity. It is not a Puppenspiel or a Kindergarten. It has nothing to do with fancy. It has only to do with imagination. That is a misleading statement of Schiller, "Ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst." Greek tragedy, *Laocoon*, *Hamlet*, and the Sistine Chapel *heiter* !

Beauty is really a tragic thing. There is a beauty which harasses and torments the human

<sup>1</sup> "Di che gli occhi miei (si come poco davanti è detto) presero tra l'altre volte un dì così fatta esperienza ; che, essendo gli straccj d'un povero uomo, da tale infermità morto, gittati nella via pubblica, et avvenendosi ad essi due porci, e quegli secondo il lor costume prima molto col grifo, e poi coi denti presigli, e scossigli alle guance, in piccola ora appresso, dopo alcuno avvolgimento, come se veleno avesser preso, amenduni sopra gli mal tirati straccj morti caddero in terra." "Decamerone," Ed. Livorno, 1812, vol. i. p. 6.

soul, because it rouses a desire for possession. And this beauty which haunts mankind, and is related to fundamental passions, can never be impersonal, since it is the beauty of the human body. How could this sense of beauty be disinterested? It is too vital to be disinterested. It is a challenge and a tyranny, and has filled the world with love and tragedy.<sup>1</sup> After all, the outward world can only be the means and scenery of our luxury. Although it re-acts on our organism in luxurious ways so that even the perfumes of rich flowers stir the senses, and are a temptation to luxurious desires, yet there is a beauty which appeals to sight and hearing and touch, and rouses a more rudimentary feeling. This is the great force which sets the soul more easily ablaze, and dazzles and overwhelms the imagination. Love, indeed, is the guider and misguider in the pageantry and procession of human feeling. This is the great passion which rides the human soul. There is a persistent figure, white-limbed, in mythology, whether he is called Tammuz or

<sup>1</sup> The drama is really based on it. Plato, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, Obermann, Stendhal and Schopenhauer have written on the tragic nature of human love. See also Prof. Goette's remarkable essay, "Ueber den Ursprung des Todes" (Hamburg und Leipzig, 1883), in which an organic relation is discovered between love and death. See also Proal's recently published work "Le Crime et le Suicide Passionels." Paris, 1900.

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Lucifer, Adonis or the Prince of the Air, and he beckons men down glimmering roads, gorgeous, bewildering roads. But, like music, he has the keys of sorrow. He has the keys of passion and death in his hands. Well might Christ say, "The Prince of this World cometh, and hath nothing in Me!"

I have looked into the chaplet of the roses of Lucifer, and behold! there are thorns. And not thorns but roses wither.



**PART IV**

**THE STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE**



## THE STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE

Now this great high road of the illusion of life leads only to death, which is our last chaos. All the contradictions of the world, indeed, are gathered up in those supreme opposites, and we know nothing but the activity of life and the activity of death. It is strange to think that he who writes this book, and many of those who read it, will not be alive in 1950. One generation prepares another's tombs, and death is like a hand that keeps unweaving everything. The fracas of life, its phantasmata, the idols and images of the pride of it—these things totter and disappear. Nature continues her colossal experiment into perpetuity. In this mixture of the farce and fiasco and the solemnity of human existence, one steady image of doom haunts and harasses the individual who has been called out of night into day. "They shall perish ; but thou remainest ; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment ; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed." Out



of this burning pit of reality our passions rise like pyramidal flames, but they shall sink to their ashes. Every passion seems to be a frantic effort to keep awake against the last sleep. We keep the soul awake by the fierce intoxicants of the lusts and the ambitions of life. We ransack the human body for every pleasure it contains, but we only hurry its collapse. We are in conspiracy against our own souls, and offer them up as spiritual plunder to the insolent world. We polish sins as we would polish diamonds and precious stones. Pleasure and pain, love and sorrow, failure and success, these are the things which splinter the human soul. And it is worn out by victory as by defeat. It is worn out by virtue as by vice, for the pain of negation torments it as much as the pain of excess. The soul, indeed, is like a piece of metal distracted by too many magnets. Through the pleasure of realisation and the pain of negation we flee to the last goal, and leave to our successors the heaped nothingness of life. The world is full of millions of dissatisfied wretches seeking for something new before the final catastrophe, when they shall be drawn into the great net of extinction. The wisest of men look upon the history of the world and the destiny of individuals as the manifestation of the strivings of an inexorable will. In this great tumult of



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facts the human mind is only discouraged and bewildered. If it keeps awake, if it retains any kind of intellectual bravery, it will refuse to acquiesce in the cowardly hushing up of the real facts of existence. It will reject optimism as a miserable sort of confectionery.<sup>1</sup> It is surprising that when a writer writes about the illusion and vanity of human things, and suspects and doubts their value, he is considered irreligious and impious. And yet the doctrine of Christianity is founded on a perception of the nothingness of life and a contempt of its glories. It is only the worldly instinct of the mediæval and the modern church which has concealed the fact that the Christian view of the world is essentially ironical and tragic. The church has discovered a *modus vivendi* with the world, and shares its pomps. Christ's keen and unflinching analysis of the nature of human existence has been obscured by dull and effeminate disciples.

Now it is quite possible that, because the world has wished to think of Christ only in a single aspect, a great deal of the real character and manner of his teaching may have been obscured. We expect to find in his sayings one persistent mode of thought unfolded in one

<sup>1</sup> "Dites nous des choses agréables et nous vous écouterons," disaient les Juifs à Moïse ; comme si l'agrément devait régler la croyance !" Pascal. "Pensées," p. 31.

persistent way. That he should be anything else than a prophet opening up the future, or that he should ever fix his eye on anything except goals and the last destinies of men, we never permit ourselves for a moment to believe. And yet it would be strange if, even supposing a great teacher had one solitary doctrine to unfold, he would choose one solitary way of expressing it. We know, for instance, that Socrates sometimes dropped his irony and spoke full in the face. And it may still be possible to discover that Jesus did the reverse, or at least it may be possible to discover among the fragmentary utterances that have come down to us, and that we have good reasons for supposing to be as genuine as, for instance, the fragments of the early Greek philosophers, some indication that he passed not only moral but also intellectual judgments on men and things. If we determine to read the New Testament apart altogether from the mass of ancient and modern belief with which it is loaded, apart too from the mass of ancient and modern literature which has grown round it, we shall take the surest way of arriving at its real meaning.

There is no more striking example of the immense influence of art upon the world than is to be found in the effect which the traditional

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portrait of Jesus has had on mankind. Perhaps with the exception of Tintoretto, who has invariably given a perturbed and almost dissatisfied expression to Christ, and of Bazzi, who makes him almost herculean, the other great painters have reproduced a type quite feminine in its delicacy, with eyelids drooping as if to cover tears. And ever since the world has not wished to see him virile. It is this traditional portrait—it might almost be taken for a figure of penitence—which rises up before us at the mention of his name, and dominates nearly all the literature which has grown round the New Testament.

It is true that the indignation of Christ has received some attention in the pulpit, but its importance in helping us to discover his own psychology has been altogether overlooked. Although there remains enough of his vehemence to let us see how intense it must have been, he still remains in popular imagination the supreme type of self-effacement, a figure almost vanishing before the storm.

Now it might almost be taken for granted, that one who has had so overwhelming an influence on the world's fortunes must have possessed a keen and aggressive insight into human nature. For all we know to the contrary, some of his parables may have been

satires on contemporary fashions and follies. And a closer examination of his sayings helps us to discover that he had more than one thing to say, and that he said it in more than one way. What is really important to find out, however, is, did Jesus look at men from an intellectual as well as from a moral standpoint? I think he did, and that his irony is as persistent as the irony of Socrates. The sense of irony is something subtler than the pleasure which consists in turning a thought off its hinges, or in stating a thing to be for a moment the opposite of what it is. It consists rather in a perpetual detection of the contradictions and surprises of life. Of this Christ is full. Even his fugitive utterances contain a certain pungency which has been lost upon us. It is easy, for instance, to point out the satire of that amusing passage, where he describes a man in bed with his children and unable to sleep because of the loud knocking by some hungry person at his door. "I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth!" This, which must have been said with a shrewd glance and a smile, is delivered from the pulpit in a perfectly solemn manner. But it is merely the belief that Jesus must always

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have been serious that prevents us seeing his real manner in such a passage, and in that other so nearly akin to it about the unjust judge. What but an ironical hand draws the picture of a judge bored to death by the loud talk of some obstinate widow? "Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me!" In the whole history of opinion there can be found nothing so remarkable as the fact that for generations the religious world has kept itself blind to the true nature of such passages, solely because it never expected to find Jesus laughing in his sleeve. If he meant anything by these incidents, he meant that generosity and justice, two things which we might expect to be in safer keeping, arrive often by way of accident, and that surprising concessions may be wrung from the world by those who are skilful enough as to ways and means. But all this, which is really vivid psychological comment for its own sake, has been turned solemn for us, and used for our redemption. His humour lies hidden in the theology which oppresses his name, and is lost to us like his gesture. So true is his own bitter remark, that men have eyes and ears to little purpose.

Instances might be multiplied to show how

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sustained is his pleasure in the ironical side of things, as for example, his picture of one blind person going forward to assist another, with the result that both are presently in the ditch. He is aware of all disillusion, and half his judgments appear to be founded on a sort of naïve disinterested analysis. But it is also true that he feels a personal annoyance on account of the irresponsiveness of the world. Like Heraclitus he turns with irritation from the displays of ordinary intelligence. He openly rates his disciples for their dullness.<sup>1</sup> "Are ye also yet without understanding?" And certainly it was not as a Saviour that he rejoiced in the fact that he could speak so darkly as to mislead all torpid hearers. "Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." He quotes with approval the saying of a prophet, that "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted and I should heal them." Christian Socialism! Jesus has a very variable opinion about the mob. His ethics are as aristocratic in their tone as the ethics of Plato. If the intellectual

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xv. 16.

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and moral stuff with which a man starts happens to be poor in quality so much the worse for the man. The one fact remains, that grapes are not found on thorns or figs on thistles. Jesus comes to the world not by any means to interfere with causes and effects, but to acquiesce in the intimacy of their relation. He approves of the dividing line which he finds running through mankind. In his own peculiar phrase men are either sheep or goats. He perceives the irony of existence, only to acquiesce in it and give it a piquant phrase—"For whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away, even that he hath." There is not much comfort for democracy here.

The centre and core of the teaching of Jesus is summed up in the statement: "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." There appears to be no cure for spiritual deafness. In spite of all that we have heard, Jesus does very little to help a man out of his fate. "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Jesus knows a rogue. And, after all, here is the end of everything. "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever

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shall deny me before men him also will I deny before my Father which is in Heaven." That is to say, it is to be score for score, or the Kingdom of Heaven is to be founded on the law, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," which in another mood he abrogates and condemns.

It is too late to provoke anything so commonplace as scepticism, by pointing out that the sayings of Jesus are not coherent. The truth is, we should not expect a spontaneous thinker to unfold a single sustained view of the universe. At any rate, it is not our task to reconcile the twin modes of thought employed by Jesus, but rather to emphasize their difference. I do not believe that he had nothing further to talk about than what is called the Kingdom of God. He seems to have had a good deal more to talk about. The sayings that have come down to us suggest a mind by no means assured of its landmarks. If he casts light not on the origin of the universe but on its process, that is no more than what any other thinker has done. The truth is, his method is Zoroastrian. While Anaxagoras thought that those who divide the world in two with a hatchet proceed in an unphilosophical way, Jesus wisely never does anything else. So far as the ultimate destiny of the world is concerned, he presents to us

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only a doubtful outpost into the unseen. Given the presupposition on which it is founded, his style of thought is simplicity itself. He is a balancer of men and things, and judges them by the standard of his own excellence. Never does he let the scales pass out of his hands. There are, indeed, a few instances in which he seems to come remarkably near the conception of necessity. Now and again, as he is driving men to what he thinks must be their supreme goal, he pauses to think that it must needs be that offences come. Even Judas is said to be not altogether able to help himself, and it is interesting to notice that the idea of prophecy, which we ought to consider as the naïve expression of determinism, seems to have captivated the mind of Jesus. But his interests are really of a practical kind. He is not so much concerned with the fact that offences must come. He has the moralist's or rather the legalist's interest in the conclusion, "Woe unto the man by whom they come." It is, of course, significant that in one passage he concedes that spiritual affairs must submit to the ordinary laws of natural growth, and, we may even add, decay. He likens the Kingdom of Heaven to a grain of mustard seed; but he does not work long with this idea. The question of man's relation to the universe,

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a question with which every system of ethics ought to start, never troubles him. Existence as such offers him no problem. He took common life for his starting-point, although he did not test its presuppositions the way Socrates did; but he must have looked very intently on what fell under his eyes. And it is only because we are in the habit of detaching his words from his surroundings that we miss the keenness of his worldly wisdom. If he had treasures of superior knowledge laid up elsewhere he makes small use of them. In spite of now and again an anxious glance towards the many mansions, his feet are planted very firmly indeed upon the earth. When he speaks of the other world it is in terms of this one.

There is evidence that he did not disdain the luxuries of life when they came in his way. The incident of the box of very precious ointment ought to settle this point. It must have been with a touch of bitterness that he said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head." And we may use the stories of the miracle at Cana of Galilee and of the miracles with the loaves and fishes to this extent, that they furnish evidence that Jesus had left an impression among his contemporaries

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that, after all, riches need not bar the entrance to the Kingdom of God. It is good to have bread in the wilderness.

It is not easy to discover what amount of novelty there is in the teaching of Jesus. He seems to adjust himself to certain tendencies he had already found and approved and to throw in his lot with them rather than to create anew for himself. The rigour of the Pharisaic interpretation of the Law was bound to create a reaction. At any rate, no system whatever, not even Christianity, starts without antecedents of some kind. Jesus himself defined his relation to the Mosaic Law. Whereas he condemned the Scribes and Pharisees in so far as they did works "to be seen of men," yet he supports their professional authority, saying, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe *that* observe and do."<sup>1</sup> His attitude is often the attitude of a timid innovator. He never quite delivered himself from the narrowness of Judaism, and it was not to be expected. Relics of Mosaicism are to be found in almost everything he uttered. It was there that he derived the severer elements of his teaching. He seems to oscillate between the rigour of the Law on the one hand and the natural charities on the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

other. He finds no compromise between them. Rather he draws more clearly than ever the line of demarcation between the children of the devil and of God. His parables, although new as regards their method, repeat a very old theme.

We have hardly any means of knowing the way in which his opinions developed. But it is interesting to observe that the incident of the Temptation is considered by the three Evangelists, who take notice of it, to have occurred early. And there should be no difficulty in accepting this as the naïve account those writers give of that period of spiritual distress through which, in their youth, some imaginative natures must pass. The significance of the Temptation is this : it contains the beginning of a style of thought which Jesus subsequently developed with great persistence. In almost all his most important utterances he seems to fall back on this early picture of the collision of the two forces, of which Nature is the expression, God and the devil. It reappears, for instance, in a startling manner in the prayer in which we pray to be delivered from evil, as if, in spite of God, the insurrectionary forces remain. And so far as Jesus was personally concerned he seems to hear for ever afterwards the mutterings and reverberations of that early

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spiritual tempest. When he was in the thick of it he seems to have begun already to perceive the anticipative irony of the early belief that in some unique sense he was the "Beloved Son." For when, in obedience to his ambitions, he proposes fantastically to put heaven to the test and to cast himself down from a pinnacle of the Temple, he draws back suspicious, and defends his scruples in that subtle manner which only those who fail to appreciate his subtlety will misinterpret. The struggle closes, certainly, with his choice of God and his rejection of the devil. But it is surely of the utmost significance that we are told that the devil left him only "for a season," a phrase which, if it implies anything, implies that he did not throughout life possess that assurance that all is well with which he is generally credited. Jesus perceives all along that there is another power at work, and he almost appears to struggle to explain it. In certain of his moods—but this is rare—he discovers that sin has more to say for itself than some people suppose. There is nothing finer in the history of practical ethics than his treatment of the "sinful woman." He knows very well that a "corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." But we look in vain for any explicit recognition of the truth that underlies such a saying. If he had wished to become

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conscious of it, more than half his teaching would have had to be given up. Jesus took no time to elaborate a system of naturalistic ethics. And yet the moralist who separates the individual from all the preceding causes that have made him what he is, and pretends to understand him and do him justice on the supposition of his autonomy, is the least instructive of teachers.

Take the parable of the sower : " Behold a sower went forth to sow ; and when he sowed some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places where they had not much earth : and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth : and when the sun was up they were scorched ; and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns ; and the thorns sprung up and choked them : but others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear let him hear." <sup>1</sup>

This parable suggests problems which it makes no attempt to solve. Seeds can grow only where they are thrown down, and it is difficult to see what control the " crops " can have over the caprice of the sower's hand.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 3 *et seqq.*

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The truth that underlies the fable is that the individual appears in the universe as the result of a force beyond his reach, but Jesus is content with the fact that some of the "seeds" have the good fortune to be let fall in the right place. He congratulates all the successes, and passes his condemnation on the blighted vegetation which follows in the sower's wake. And yet, read in the light of the theory which this parable suggests, there was never a more vivid illustration of the naturalistic view of the world.

The next parable is, in some ways, even more instructive. "The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him : Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest : and in the time of harvest I will say

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to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them ; but gather the wheat into my barn." <sup>1</sup>

The sower is the son of man. He is responsible for the good seed. The devil is, one supposes, responsible for the tares, since they are described as his children. But the whole question of the real responsibility of the individual for his inheritance of evil is left out of account. If the parable had been spoken by any one except Jesus, who would have been satisfied with it? The modern doctrine of predisposition to vice lies latent in it, and yet its conclusions, based as they are on the dogma of responsibility, are inconsistent with that doctrine. If you are a "tare," and if soil is provided for your roots, what can you do but grow? It is useless to reply that the individual has no right to be a "tare." His choice in the matter is never even considered by Jesus. The criminal is the expression of a power that lies beyond him, and that brought him into being. It is sufficient for Jesus that, as he says elsewhere, "every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." It is enough, if vengeance falls not on the source of evil but on every one unfortunate enough to be its vehicle.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 24 *et seqq.*

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"Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, which when it was full they drew to the shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth and separate the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."<sup>1</sup>

The same style of thought is repeated, because it is the chief message from Jesus. Good news! Not the exegesis of Calvin, but that of his more tolerant successors, is inaccurate. Jesus knows that the "good fish" and the "bad fish" are there, and his chief interest is in the fact that in time the net will be provided. The "fisher of men" is extremely fastidious. He once asked people if they could add a cubit to their stature. But what if the moral stature is also a fixed quantity? As we have seen, he perceives this more than once, but not its momentousness, and he goes on pointing his antitheses.

Take again the extraordinary parable of the marriage of the king's son (Matt. xxii. *et seqq.*)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 47 *et seqq.*

<sup>2</sup> Doubtless the equivalent in Luke is the parable of the Great Supper.

The rich people refused to come. The high-ways and hedges were then ransacked for beggars, or, as Luke says, the streets and lanes of the city were searched (Luke xiv. *et seqq.*).<sup>1</sup> The outcast came, hungry enough we may suppose; but there is discovered among them an individual without a "wedding garment."

Yet supposing they were all suitably dressed, it is not to be expected that a beggar should wear finery. And, besides, the feast, according to Luke, was made for beggars just because they were beggars. We should not be surprised when we are told that the individual who was reprimanded remained speechless. Jesus clinches the story by what must have been a favourite phrase, "Many are called but few are chosen." It would be a pleasure to believe that he was satirising the theological view of the universe. Even supposing that this parable is to be interpreted in an allegorical sense, and that the "garments" are to be considered of a spiritual kind, yet the same criticism applies; because it was for the spiritually naked, those who are covered only with the "looped and windowed raggedness" of their morality that the feast of comfort was ordained. The truth

<sup>1</sup> There is some variation in the account. Luke does not give the full parable.

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is that it was not by any superior intuition but by long study of the irony of the world that Jesus was able to gather his philosophy of life into the stinging epigram, "So the last shall be first and the first last."

It is perhaps not necessary at this stage to point out that the parables of the Ten Virgins and of the Ten Talents sustain the same mode of thought. The parable of the Ten Virgins, indeed, is singularly piquant. As if, when the five wise persons proposed that the five foolish should go to buy oil for themselves, their wise heads did not know that it was already too late. It is enough for Jesus if, amid general mediocrity, a few are found with sharp enough wits. It is hard to see how the answer of the five wise is compatible with that self-denial to the uttermost which Christianity is supposed to involve. And the parable of the Ten Talents is further proof that a single consciousness may combine strong powers of compassion with the most remorseless rigour. It is really to the world's credit that it prefers to remember Jesus in the moods of his tenderness, and to accept the parables of the Lost Sheep and of the Prodigal Son as typical. It is in them that he appeals almost overwhelmingly to our emotions. But they are not more typical than the others, and exactly one half of the teaching of Jesus

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may be massed up in opposition to the other half.

The parable of the Ten Talents, as given by Luke, is preceded by the cheering news that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. But an inspection of the parable compels us to accept that statement in the most limited sense. The parable is this:—  
“For the Kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man *according to his several ability*,<sup>1</sup> and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents, and likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two; but he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them; and so he that had received five talents, came and brought other five talents, saying, ‘Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents, behold I have gained beside them five talents more.’ His lord said unto him, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful

<sup>1</sup> The italics are not in the original.

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over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy lord,' " and so with the next, until the third. "Then he which had received the one talent came and said : ' Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou has not strawed ; and I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth ; lo ! there thou hast that is thine.' His lord answered, and said unto him, ' Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not and gather where I have not strawed. Thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance ; but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath ; and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness ;<sup>1</sup> there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "

Now the most striking statement in this parable is that these presents were given to the recipients, " every man according to his ability." There is a scale of abilities among individuals varying from the highest to the lowest. The

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 14 *et seqq.*

interval between the highest and the lowest may be as wide as possible, but the truth is recognised that as you proceed down the scale it is in a diminishing ratio until zero is reached. This is as true now as when Jesus uttered it ; but the rest of the parable is inconsistent with such a purely scientific view of the intellectual and moral qualities of mankind. The " failure " in this case was a man whose abilities were for all practical purposes at zero. Whether or not he was correct in his estimate of his lord—and from his subsequent treatment it almost looks as if he had been correct—the work given him to do was *not* " according to *his* ability." It is his employer who has gone wrong. The man is a pathological case, whereas Jesus had already recognised the necessity of laying even moral burdens only on backs that can bear them. But the parable does not close in a way in which its opening leads us to hope. We expect the theory of punishment to be stated in the regenerative form. But it is stated in the vindictive form. Your bad lot are simply to be destroyed like vermin. If the individual is not born in a high enough scale of being, it is his own look out. So that for Jesus, as for Peter, the limits of forgiveness seem, after all, to be very definite indeed.

In short, he tells us in various ways that

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"virtue is knowledge," though he does not accept the consequences that result from such a theory. Reality for Jesus means the repetition of two different types. He did not trouble to put what, from some points of view, may be admitted to be the irrational question, "Is Nature just?" He is satisfied with the ironical see-saw of destiny—

"Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger!"

"Woe unto you that laugh, for ye shall weep!"

He has made long study of the wheel of fortune. "I tell you that in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, where, lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither shall the eagles be gathered together." It is to be a perpetual decimation. Jesus fixes his eye on the unalterable destinies of the world, and never lifts a finger to stay them. He does nothing to change the existing order. He only interprets it.

It is surprising that the world is so familiar with the idea that he was a "Saviour." Really, he is a piquant moral analyst; but the criticism which encumbers the New Testament hides the real truth from us, and creates a

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fictitious personage. I have indicated, however, only in a very rough manner, what deserves a complete and laborious analysis. I have not used all the material that is at disposal for the purpose. And yet the Sermon on the Mount, with its strange combination of hedonism, universal charity, and sectarian bitterness, is as valuable for our specific aim as the parables that have been cited. For it might be shown that, starting from a disguised sort of hedonism,<sup>1</sup> Jesus goes on to develop by contradiction his twin modes of thought, giving with one hand what he takes away with the other. The Sermon on the Mount, it is true, has a softer tone than almost anything else, so far as we know, that he ever said. But it, too, is full of surprises. Jesus soon falls back on the point of view from which life appears to be a dreary contract between God and man. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And it is noticeable that he is made to finish this sermon in a way that became characteristic. For he there paints in a vivid manner the picture of the foolish person carried off in the rains and floods which sooner or later carry off all foolish persons.

<sup>1</sup> "Great is your reward in Heaven."

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If any one chance to be offended by the point of view indicated here, he must go to the sayings of Jesus, in order to discover whether or not they bear the interpretation that has been put upon them. It is, happily, not a question of origins, about which the most capable scholars may fall out. It is simply a question of the inner coherence of the received record of what Jesus said. If he is to be intelligible at all, his words must mean just what they would mean if spoken by any other historical personage. Erasmus said long ago that Jesus is growing obsolete ; but it is because the criticism which surrounds him is obsolete, and has no vitality. And yet there ought to be no question that any progressive movement of thought involves the discovery and the disappearance of all irrelevances ; *i.e.*, simply, it involves the correction of the excesses of primitive beliefs. The world seems never to know what to do with its great characters at their first appearance, and invariably throws out a hypothesis about them which it may take centuries to verify. The judgment of the world, indeed, moves very cautiously from the problematic to the assertoric stage, but it moves at last. It is too seldom seen that the rate of progress depends on the amount of superfluous matter which lies about the hypothesis. In the case of Jesus, it

has been remarkably slow for reasons that I cannot enter into here. But the history of every science is the history of the slow accumulation of error, and then of the slower elimination of it. And the task laid on every age is to set limits to the unlimited exaggerations of its predecessors, until what was a misleading problematic judgment begins at length to assume the form of a judgment of valuation.

Now even this brief analysis ought to be sufficient to prove that, if the New Testament is examined from within, it may be shown to contain no solution of the enigma of existence. In its essence Christianity is a criticism of this life, and makes only the vaguest reference to any other life. It was a later age which superimposed on the early teaching a mass of data and detail of which the early exponents knew nothing.<sup>1</sup> We are not taught primitive Christian doctrine at all, but we grow up among the accumulations and traditions which have gathered round it. The hopes and the fears of the Middle Ages are still vital in the churches. But in any case, the Gospels leave the great perturbing facts of existence untouched. They contain only a naïve statement of the illusions of human life. They do not explain, they only aggravate the difficulties which obstruct a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Harnack's "History of Dogma." English Translation.

thinker in his attempt to discover any fixed meaning in existence. To put this world into a moral relation with another only increases and extends the bewilderment. The problem for all religious teachers consists in an attempt to connect the existence of the godless outer world with the existence of God. In other words, they have to ask themselves why the creation should have taken place at all, if, as they must believe, God is perfect *without* the world, and if this present world is only a mockery of the real world?<sup>1</sup> No religion has ever answered that question. But almost every religion—and especially Christianity—has laid the blame of the world's sin and disorder on man. We have seen, however, over and over again, that man is involved in a process which he cannot control, but to which he gives only articulate expression. The antinomies of being lie deeper than *his* life, and he is the spectator of a universe which passes for ever through two contradictory phases, each of which is necessary to the other. Christ naïvely described this divided empire of the world by saying that within the "Kingdom of God," or side by side with it,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Meister Eckhart" von Adolf Lasson. Berlin 1868. "Körperlichkeit," says Eckhart, "ist ein Abfall von Wesen, eine blosse Accidenz und eine Verschlechterung" (p. 133). Lasson gives an admirable analysis of the difficulty.

there is a Kingdom of Beelzebub. The truth is, Christianity like most religions is a system of ethics ; it takes the conditions of life for granted, and offers not a theory of speculation but a theory of conduct. From this point of view, there can be nothing but praise for such a book as Chateaubriand's "*Génie du Christianisme*," which presents Christianity as the greatest purifying influence the world has known.<sup>1</sup> It would be foolish to deny, indeed, that the religion of Christ has saved thousands of human beings from disaster. No doubt it brought new horrors on the world in the shape of wars and persecutions, since madness and sanity are mixed in all human things. But there can be no question that it has acted as a powerful ideal, and although it increased human suffering to an alarming extent, it has made life easier for thousands of its adherents. For the only reality that an ideal requires is the reality of a beckoning hand. We are not concerned here, however, with the practical value

<sup>1</sup> Chateaubriand was more a sentimentalist than a thinker. The artist in him was predominant. He censures "*cette imprudente philosophie qui cherche trop à pénétrer la nature de l'homme et à trouver le fond partout.*" His limitations and his charm are seen in the following : "*Il ne faut pas toujours laisser tomber la sonde dans les abîmes du cœur ; les vérités qu'il contient sont du nombre de celles qui demandent le demi-jour et le perspective.*"—"Génie du Christianisme," p. 233. Paris : Hachette.

of Christianity, or with any attempt to disturb the sleep of pious minds. We are concerned rather with the question, What ultimate belief is possible for a modern brain, which has penetrated through the sentimentalism of conventional opinion to the raw facts of existence? An intellect which is really awake discovers that man is immersed in a great vortex of causes. But if so, we are unable to pass rash judgments of condemnation upon him. If there is any truth in the general view of existence that has been expressed in this book, namely, that the essence of things consists in a dual and perpetual conflict which extends into the domain of human life, then both sides of the process must be seen to be inevitable. In the language of metaphysicians, the world oscillates between the tendency towards Being, and the tendency towards Not Being. Or, in simpler words, a constructive and a destructive process is for ever at work. This is the process, which in the moral life of man is symbolised under the form of contradiction between Evil and Good.<sup>1</sup> The final task of a thinker is, therefore, a statement of the dilemma between the intellect and the emotions.

<sup>1</sup> "Essi ammettono due principj metafisici, l'Ente cioè, che è Dio supremo, ed il Niente, che è la mancanza d'entità, ed il termine dal quale fisicamente si produce qualche cosa, perchè

I am aware that according to many schools of thought, the final task of a thinker ought to be to think all things in one. But such a task has never really been accomplished.<sup>1</sup> No doubt the ideal of all knowledge is some vast synthesis. But every synthesis which has been reached has been imperfect, because either emotion has been subordinated to thought or thought to emotion. The syntheses of philosophy and of religion are not the same, for the one is an affair of the intellect, and the other is an affair of the emotions. It is this dilemma between the intellect and the emotions which I have tried to present throughout this book. The fact that there is a single substance which endures amid the contradictions of its multitudinous forms may indeed help the human mind to see all things in one, but it can never suppress the individual's consciousness of "difference" and division and struggle. Doubtless every scientific advance has resulted in a reduction of complex into simpler elements. The problems

*non si fa ciò che esiste, dunque non esisteva ciò che fu fatto. Così pure dall' Ente e dal Niente prende essenza l'essere finito. Parimente dalla tendenza al non essere trae origine il male ed il peccato.*—Campanella, "Citta del sole," p. 137. Ed. Milano, 1863.

<sup>1</sup> "The harmony of opposites" of Heraclitus is nothing more than a phrase. What really impressed him was the "Flux." Cf. "Early Greek Philosophy." J. Burnet, 1892. Mr. Burnet points out (p. 147) that the so-called "identity" was purely physical.

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of biology become more involved as the observer passes from the most primitive to the most complex organisms, but the most complex may be reduced to the fundamental cell or protoplasm within protoplasm, whatever it is, which forms the nucleus of organic life. So, too, in astronomy. Although one star differs from another in magnitude, and although every star has its own spectrum, yet by means of spectrum analysis the investigator discovers that each shares the physical rudiments of every other. Every science, indeed, moves towards ultimate "units," and physics, for instance, expresses all its phenomena in terms of force and motion. It may be admitted, too, that whereas the ordinary observer supposes that the universe is made up of objects in isolated lots, differing in kind, the man of science knows that the differences are only apparent. A vast continuity of substance, if not of form, exists not merely among living things but among things that are living and things that appear to be dead. This advance towards "unity" is common to all the sciences. There is, moreover, a correlated movement among them which finally leads up to great generalisations, such as the Laws of Newton, in which the whole process of the universe is seen to be an expression of the principle of gravitation. But this conception of the unity of all



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substance is merely scientific, and is an affair of the intellect. I do not see how the fact that within and around us there is a substance which persists while we pass away can be a matter of enthusiasm or comfort to any one. That the stream and ourselves are parts of the same process does not console us as we are being swept down with it. From the beginning, philosophers have left man as an emotional spectator too much out of account. The fact that the only permanence in the universe is change, may indeed satisfy or amuse his intellect, but it only bewilders his imagination. And if he can find nothing which is an end in itself, the mere process towards ends that collapse and disappear to make room for others, seems to be what Voltaire called *une mauvaise plaisanterie*.

Religion, of course, is the supreme attempt to satisfy this emotional need. But if we look into its history and its psychology we shall find that it too is subject to that same law of endless antithesis which is the root and substance of all knowledge. It is a surprising error to suppose that spiritual conceptions introduce order into the scheme of things. For "spirit" is as disordered as matter, and more disordered. For centuries the church taught her followers that there had been war in Heaven, and that the

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conflict which is in progress between this world and the other world was the necessary outcome of some dissension among the powers that are higher than man. This is the naïve expression of the truth that spiritual values are to be discovered only in the antagonism of opposed purposes. For instance, it used to be considered a heresy to deny the existence of the devil, because like God he was considered to have been in being from the beginning. Religious faith indeed, moved for hundreds of years between those two poles, and in the Middle Ages consciousness of God was not possible without consciousness of the devil. This is the religious form of the paradox which has met us elsewhere.

Moreover, religious belief is not a fixed product which remains the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It suffers variation and change, assumes antagonistic forms, and rather follows than governs the movement of the world. Many of the great theological controversies which convulsed the church had their origin in personal quarrels among the saints.<sup>1</sup> The whole movement of belief, indeed, has been stained with error, hesitation, and doubt from the beginning. The founders of religion warned their followers that unbelief has a natural place in the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Harnack. *Op. cit.* p. 332.

scheme of things.<sup>1</sup> And religious history proves the truth of it. Dogmas, the denial of which meant damnation in one age, disappear in another, and submit to the general crumbling of human things. In short the church has tossed on the waves of the world and has never stilled them. She has submitted to the inevitable process of decay and transformation, which is common to every type of human society. Her attempt to make the world a great theological melodrama has notoriously failed. Her own history is an ironical comment on the "unity" of faith. Like other things she has developed by fission. Ecclesiastical history is just ordinary history with a special adjective, and is full of the same oscillations, for the church has mimicked and repeated the general process of human affairs, and takes her place in the vast list of errata.

If, too, we look into the religious consciousness we shall find that it has no immobile form, but is protean. If God makes us in His image it is also true that we make Him in ours. Feuerbach worked out, by means of a kind of brutal modern analysis, the important truth that

<sup>1</sup> Christ spoke of Antichrist. And in the "Vendidad" Angra Mainyu is said to have "counter-created the sin of utter unbelief."—Darmesteter's Translation, p. 8.

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the history of religion is the history of human self-consciousness,<sup>1</sup> for God has no qualities which man has not given Him. Xenophanes pointed out that if God were an object to a bird He would be a winged creature, if He were an object to a four-footed being He would be four-footed. In other words, the finite transposes all its own qualities to the infinite. Thus the conception of God has not remained the same throughout the history of the world. It has changed with the changes in human culture. If a nation is sunk in barbarism its God is a barbarian; but as civilisation advances there is a gradual refinement in all religious ideas. Religious belief moves between the two conceptions, Man and God, and as the one changes the other changes.

This is the great truth with which Eckhart, the profoundest of European minds, is full. Any one who is too timid to face the contradictions which a thorough examination, like Eckhart's, discovers in ultimate religious ideas should, of course, not read him. But he remains from an intellectual point of view the most important figure in the church. He is no

<sup>1</sup> "The beginning, middle, and end of religion is man." Cf. "Essence of Christianity." Geo. Eliot's Translation. Ed. 1893, p. 104. See also ch. xxv. in Bradley's "Appearance and Reality."

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doubt a profound ethical and religious thinker, but he subjects religious conceptions to a strange and disturbing analysis. In the guise of a mystic Eckhart is one of the greatest sceptics of the world. While the ordinary religious mind supposes that belief is the highest form it can attain, Eckhart rejects belief as the lowest form of the religious life. His reason is that the object of belief is still outside the soul.<sup>1</sup> In a satirical passage he points out that many people believe in God as they believe in their cow, so long as it has milk to give them.<sup>2</sup> But man can find God, he says, only if he does not seek Him in God alone, for God is meaningless apart from man. He analyses the ordinary theological conception, and shows that it no more escapes the taint of relativity than any other conception. It makes God as much the dependent of the soul as the soul is His dependent. "Before man appeared God was not God."<sup>3</sup> Or in other words if man were to disappear from the world God would disappear. Atheism, therefore, has no meaning.

<sup>1</sup> "Der Glaube lässt sein Objekt noch draussen stehen." Lasson's Eckhart, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> "Manche Menschen sehen Gott an wie sie eine Kuh ansehen, und wollen ihn lieben wie sie eine Kuh lieben." *Ibid.* p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> "Ehe die Creaturen waren, war Gott nicht Gott." *Op. cit.* p. 128.

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God and man are indissolubly united and opposed. The religious consciousness consists in this last great conflict of the human mind. It is a perpetual struggle to envisage the infinite. But we cannot by a mere accumulation of finite qualities succeed in filling up that conception. The infinite is beyond qualitative and quantitative expression. Believers and unbelievers all meet at the point where tongues cease and prophecies fail and knowledge vanishes away.

Religion at its best is a prolonged emotion and kind of eavesdropping on the unseen. It is only natural that as man watches the passing away of the world he desires to become conscious of imperishable things. We keep hoping that death may be the great talisman. Thus the church teaches us that the world is only a market for immortality. This admirable megalomania is indeed necessary to a being whose mortality oppresses him at every point. The psychological skill with which the church has seized this instinct in human nature has not been sufficiently praised. It is the culmination of the attempt to find persistence *somewhere*. But it is not possible to picture those new phantasmagorias, or to acquaint ourselves with what "eye hath not seen." Unless man were given new faculties a future life would be un-

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intelligible, except under the form of the present. It would be a new series of antitheses. This is the sole burden and heat of thought. All that we know or can ever know is a struggle. All that we know is "the monstrous paradox" of this life, of which Saint Augustine speaks. Only a shallow and unimaginative thinker pretends to offer us a consistent theory of the world. For paradox is the essence of all fact and all knowledge. Around us and beneath us lies the unexplored. And who has not heard that inward derision and subdued laugh of the soul when any final belief has been offered it? It sits like an unconvinced convert among so many beliefs! Man is lonely in the midst of the anonymous universe; its meaning flees for ever before his scrutiny.

But in the jumble of beliefs one fact remains fixed and dominant: ethics is everything. So far as the individual is concerned the only reality that is vital to him is his conduct, the struggle of his phantasy<sup>1</sup> against his fatality, the struggle of this incorruptible with its corruption. There are things which bewilder the soul as it looks out upon the momentous world. But it has, besides, its own fight to fight with itself. In the midst of the destructive processes

<sup>1</sup> But his phantasy is also his fatality. The world is fatality struggling with fatality.

